

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

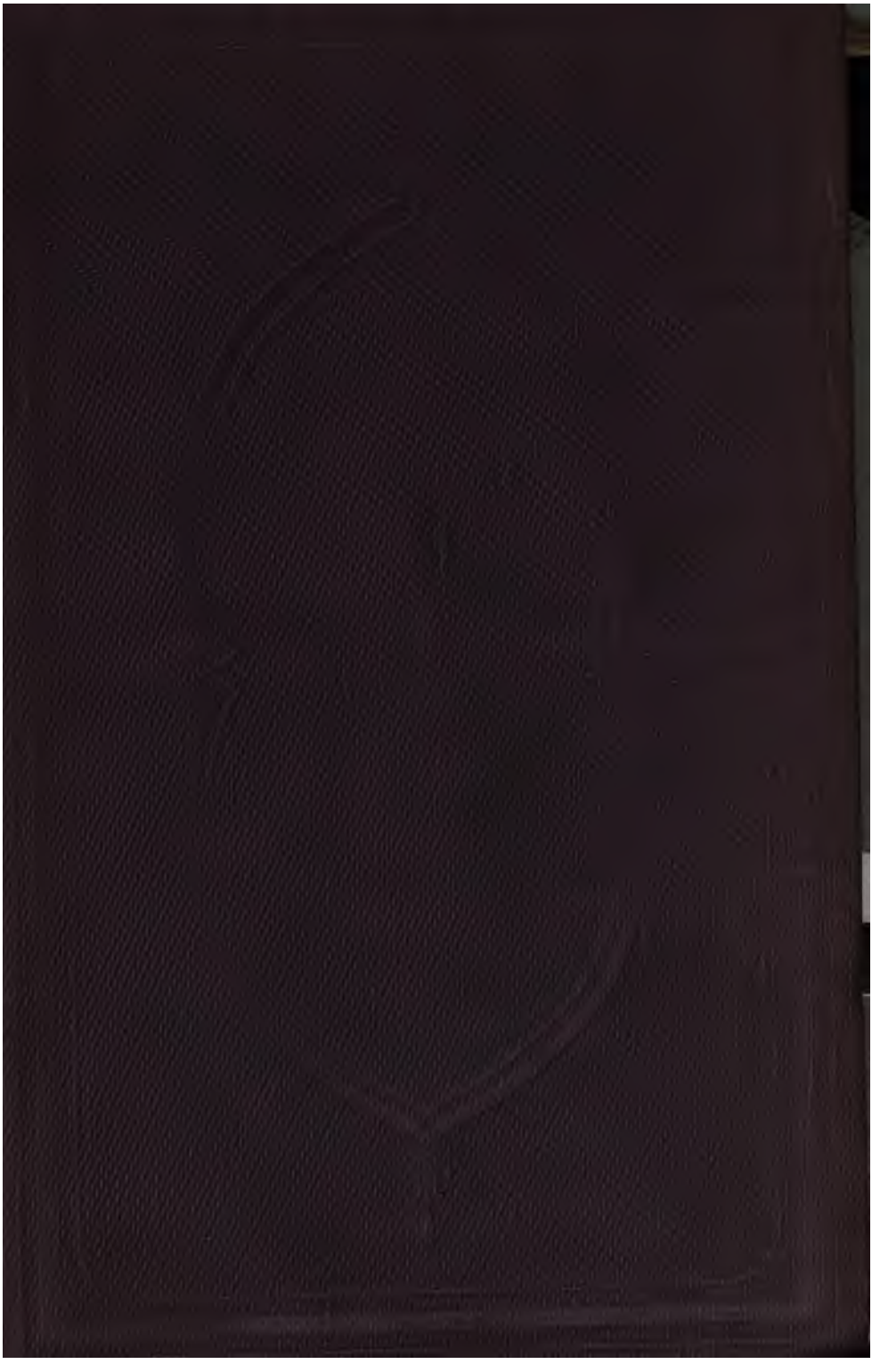
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`




600073209R

L E O.

A NOVEL.

By DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF "A PRODIGAL SON," PAUL FOSTER'S DAUGHTER," ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

M.DCCC.LXIII.

250. f. 15.



[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

Chap.		Page
I.	Duress	1
II.	Tears	36
III.	The Retreat from Oakmere	70
IV.	The Marquis of Southernwood	104
V.	Two of a Trade	129
VI.	Punishment	160
VII.	Mrs. Lomax's Governess	195
VIII.	The First Column of "The Times."	220
IX.	A Catasrophe	245
X.	The "Kangaroo," A 1,—For Port Philip	371
	Postscript	298

L E O.

CHAPTER I.

DURESS.

"Well," remarked Mr. Lackington, "I *am* astonished. Arnold arrested! Arnold, of all men! Why, here have I been in debt all my life and no one has ever paid *me* the compliment of arresting me. No creditor in his wildest dreams, —and creditors have very wild dreams—they are generally persons of great imaginative power—no creditor ever once presumed to hope that he could do himself any good by arresting *me*. You see you can't get blood out of a stone. That the fact is so universally acknowledged, is a great comfort for the stone. It saves it no end of incon-

venience, and pressure, and squeezing. *I* am left at large—poor, embarrassed, in debt, and yet free—while Arnold, whom I have always looked upon as a millionnaire, a man who might fairly have sat for the portrait of Crœsus—Arnold, whose life seemed to me to be one enormous balance at his bankers'—Arnold is ignominiously arrested and carried to a sponging-house! It can't be, Rob; the thing's not commonly possible; there must have been some frightful mistake: or Arnold must have done the thing on purpose, to try a new experience of life, just as kings have before now played at being beggars for an hour or two by way of amusement; or he got arrested as a polite way of avoiding Binns' story about Monte Rosa, which seems to have frightened all the men away. He's such a tremendous gentleman is Arnold, he would rather undergo any amount of personal inconvenience than wound the feelings even of Binns. Don't look so serious, Rob. The thing isn't true. It's only a fairy tale. The genius of the ring has disappeared behind a cloud. Let's clap our hands three times; if you know an incantation say or sing it, and he'll emerge supreme and effulgent as ever. Where are you going, Rob?"

"To Arnold. He mustn't be alone; he mustn't

think that we fall away from him now he's in trouble." Robin spoke very seriously.

"Stuff, Rob. Stay where you are. Arnold told Hugh Wood particularly, that no one was to come to him to-night. But to-morrow morning he hoped to see some of us; and to be out in the course of the day."

"Poor Arnold!" said Robin, tenderly.

"Don't take too gloomy a view of the thing, Robin. It will all come right in the end. Why do you shake your head?"

"I fear all this is more serious than you have any idea of. Arnold has not been himself of late. I couldn't help seeing that, though I did not like—I felt I had no right, to question him on the subject. There has been something hanging over him, oppressing him terribly. I fear we have only as yet the first drops of the shower—there may be worse to come. It is not merely a question of money, Jack."

"You are right, Rob; I had forgotten." And Mr. Lackington's tone became more subdued. "He has really cause for unhappiness. I did not know it until he spoke of it himself half an hour ago. It is ten times worse than any mere money loss, though I should be the last to speak lightly of

considerations of that sort. You knew that the engagement had come to an end?"

"I feared so. I heard from home lately. There was great talk of it in the country: they were full of it. But they did not know the particulars. Poor Arnold! How he must suffer under all this. I can't bear to think of it."

"But it will come right. I have faith in Arnold's luck; Dame Fortune has been so kind to him all his life that I'm quite sure she won't have the heart to leave him now." But Robin shook his head.

"If it were only the money!" he said.

"Well, yes. A man can be tolerably happy without money; instance myself," cried Jack Lackington. "I've none, and I'm not particularly miserable that I know of. Perhaps it's the brandy-and-water keeps me up; but I even feel particularly jolly at this moment; though, of course, I'm sorry for Arnold."

Rob looked at him rather curiously.

"I am, Rob. Put away that very unusual, sarcastic expression, please, for a more fitting occasion. Don't accuse me of holding with some one or other that there is something not altogether disagreeable to us in the misfortunes of our friends.

It isn't that we like their misfortunes: because we don't; but we like them better, because of their misfortunes. Don't you feel that you care more for Arnold now than ever you did? Isn't he brought somehow ever so much nearer to you by reason of his troubles? Before, he seemed to be mounted upon such a pedestal of good luck that I couldn't reach up to him, much less shake hands with him. Now he's down, he seems to me more human, more mortal, and I can get my arms well round him and hold him to my heart. Brave old Arnold! Down on his luck; locked up in Chancery Lane. I feel like a brother to him!"

"Decidedly it's the brandy-and-water," Robin remarked quietly.

Meanwhile Arnold resigned himself quietly to a state of durance in a Cursitor Street sponging-house. He did not permit himself to be violently dejected at the unpleasantness of his situation. There was much passive courage at the bottom of his *insouciance;* and perhaps he had been so long a time suffering under a dread of coming trouble, it was a positive relief to him to find himself contending at last with a real and tangible misfortune. About a vague, shapeless apprehension of evil there is something more dreadful always than in the

evil itself. A great misfortune had overtaken him at last—there was no mistake about it—in the shape of a sheriff's officer. He resigned himself to the care of that functionary; and the key was turned upon him: the barred windows were in front of him. He felt something as a recruit feels on the eve of a long-expected engagement; sick with waiting; pale, not from fear, but from suspense; grateful at last to hear the roar of the cannonading commencing, and to know that he was certainly in for the real thing at last; free to tighten his belt, moisten his palms the better to grasp his weapons, clench his teeth, draw a good long breath, settle his bonnet firmly on his brow, and prepare to meet the enemy.

And this with no experience of misfortune, with no positive knowledge as to the extent of his trouble, with no correct appraisement of his real position; only with a suspicion, daily taking more and more shape and greater ugliness, that matters were going very wrong indeed—that ill-luck had followed upon the heels of ill-luck, and that there was no help for it now but to stand at bay. He had been careless, indolent, negligent, apathetic; he was reaping the crop of trouble his own folly had sown. He had trusted in others, had let things

take their chance, and had been tricked, duped, swindled; half laughing and conscious, half unsuspectingly trusting—too true and honest himself to take the trouble to question others—too apathetic and easy-going and heedless of consequences. Well, he had shut his eyes to some purpose. He now opened them in a sheriff's lock-up house. Yet it was of little use now to sit and cry, wring his hands, and do nothing. There had been enough of doing nothing as it was.

He was an Englishman; with plenty of pluck and activity when you could once bring him to believe that need was for both of these. Prosperity had made him a little sluggish: even if this were not in some measure innate and constitutional. He would never get up and hit a man if he could do it sitting down. In his old days at Oxford, he had been known as a fellow who played always a waiting game,—though that, it might be, was as much owing to indolence as intention—who never did much until he was thoroughly warmed to his work. When his colleagues spoke of his sparring, it was generally to laud the noble way in which he took his punishment: at first playing a good deal—too much many thought—with his adversary, treating the thing too much as

a joke, not careful enough of himself, getting up smiling when he went down, but always somehow coming out winner in the end; for his left fairly in play, there was very little standing up against it—as all confessed—a hard hitter when he chose; only he did not, the lament ran, choose often enough or early enough in the game.

He did not yield, then, to his misfortune. His step did not lose its elasticity, his eye its brightness; the look was still open, frank, and cheery, though the face was a trifle thinner and more careworn than of old. When a cloud of anguish oppressed him, it was not to be attributed to the misfortune that had made him a prisoner. Robin Hooper's quick perceptions had lighted upon the real cause of trial. "If it were only the money," Arnold groaned now and then, unconsciously repeating Robin's words. "If it were only the money!" And his thoughts travelled to Croxall Chase, and returned much the worse for the journey, loaded with a gloomy picture; his Leo the wife of another! And he could say nothing! do nothing! he had no right to blame any one but himself. *There* was the real sting of his grief.

It was some comfort even to turn from this sorrow to his money embarrassments; on the plan of

counter-irritation, perhaps. He stirred himself. It was late at night, but he wrote letters to be delivered the first thing in the morning—one to his brother-in-law, to be left at the Wafer Stamp Office, Whitehall; the other to his solicitors, who had acted for the family for many years, Messrs. Holroyd and Hopegood, Lincoln's Inn Fields, requesting at once their advice and assistance.

He had heard of sponging-houses often enough —certain of his artist friends had quite famous stories to tell concerning them; and he had read of them in modern novels: never dreaming that he should himself become so intimately acquainted with a place of the kind as to be locked up in one, a guest of the sheriff's officer. He half smiled; the position was so strange, and new, and curious. The place was hardly so prisonlike, so comfortless, as he had imagined it would be. The rooms were certainly small and close, and the numberless bars had rather a monotonous and wearisome effect; while generally there was a want of air and some absence of cleanliness about the house. But the people of the place were very civil—didn't look wonderingly at him, as he had feared they would; forgetting how accustomed they must be to all descriptions of prisoners for debt. They were civil, and

respectful, and obliging, perhaps because of that prosperous moneyed look about him, which not even the atmosphere of a lock-up could tarnish, much less deprive him of altogether. He went to bed, lying awake some hours: but ultimately he slept soundly enough. It takes a good deal to deprive a thoroughly healthy man of his sleep, and Arnold had hardly known a day's illness in the whole course of his life.

He was not very early in the morning; he had rather a habit of rising late. He was offered a private sitting-room, but he declined it; he thought the public room might furnish some amusement. He had little secretiveness or love of concealment; besides, the chance of being recognized by any of the other lodgers seemed to be too remote to be worth considering. He felt as though he were staying at an hotel of far too shabby a character for any of his friends or acquaintances to be tenants of it also.

He entered the coffee-room on the following morning. He found himself in the presence of a fellow prisoner. "Business was very slack," the attendant admitted, in a tone of deep regret, and an accent guttural, nasal, Jewish. "There ain't but vun other gent in the 'ole 'ouse besides yerself."

The other captive was at breakfast, with his back to the door. The table-cover was rather creased, spotted, and stained; a black coffee-pot was yielding blacker coffee, strongly chicorized; there were two dingy-looking eggs in cracked egg-cups; and a violent odour of red-herring pervaded the room. The man who sat at the table, surrendering himself to the vigorous enjoyment of these dainties, was very tall, thin, narrow-chested, with tufts of white in his sandy hair. He was clothed in black, closely buttoned to the chin, and wore a wide cravat of black silk, apparently wound many times round his crane neck, and tied in a minute bow in front. He turned round as Arnold entered the room, exhibiting a small-featured, freckled, pink face, with weak eyes and white teeth. He started up in some confusion, and advanced, holding forth two long, white, welcoming hands.

"My dear Mr. Page," he said, in a high falsetto voice, "now this is really kind of you, truly good!" And the pink of his complexion deepened to crimson.

Arnold, with much amazement, recognized the Rector of Oakmere, the Rev. Purton Wood. He was next conscious of his hands being vehemently grasped and shaken.

"Real Christian kindness: and the difficulty I had to persuade Hugh to go to you! I knew that I was right. I felt convinced that there would be no hesitation on your part."

"I fear there has been some mistake," said Arnold, as soon as he had a little recovered from his surprise.

"Yes, my dear Mr. Page, of course there has been a great mistake, a cruel mistake, of which unfortunately I have been the victim. Pray forgive me if I have not hitherto done you justice. I have not made allowances. Those of my cloth are apt to take perhaps too severe views of things. We have been parted a good deal, in spite of our being near neighbours at Oakmere, notwithstanding I am the rector of that place. We shall know each other better in the future. I hope your dear sister is quite well. I hope my excellent friend Lomax is quite well. I have been compelled to be absent of late much more than I could have wished, getting a substitute to do my duty, or simply driving in on the Sunday morning; very unwillingly, I confess, for I have all my life set my face strenuously against Sunday travelling, —opposed it to the utmost of my power,—it can so generally be avoided! But in an unfortunate

hour, suffering under a merely momentary pecuniary inconvenience, I was so imprudent—I admit it freely, I avow my fault, no one can condemn my conduct more severely than I do myself—I was so weak and thoughtless as to obtain money upon my note of hand, given to a Jew, one Moss, a bill discounter——"

"Pray Mr. Wood, do not——"

"My dear friend, I must insist! In justice to myself, it is only right that you should be furnished with the particulars of this unhappy business. I know nothing of business; the many calls upon my time during a long life of earnest toil, though I say it, have been of how different a nature! I am a mere child in affairs of this kind—quite helpless in all matters of a pecuniary kind. I fear I neglected to do what I ought; I permitted time to elapse. It seems I was not ready at some precise moment with a sum of money that was expected of me. I really find a difficulty in explaining, even in myself comprehending, how the thing occurred: and I fear I am using all sorts of untechnical terms. But I found myself sued upon the bill, and served with what I think is called a writ. I let things take their course, presuming that at last they would leave me at peace; but

this Moss grew very angry, and was unwearying in his persecution of me. My furniture he could not touch, it was secured by a bill of sale—I believe that to be the correct title of the document, the nature of which I am quite at a loss to understand—a bill of sale given to a third party—"

"Really, Mr. Wood——"

"One moment longer and I have done. Moss then sought to arrest me. You know we are on the borders of Woodlandshire; I was down in another county, coming over to the service on the Sunday, and returning the same day. That terrible Moss! He had writs of execution out against me in three counties—I was taken yesterday afternoon. Pray be warned by my example, my dear young friend: never put your name to a bill! However great your necessity, never do that! I sent Hugh on to you at once. He is not all I could wish; it is with deep pain I have so to speak of my own son, my only son. He is intemperate, headstrong, disinclined to make allowances. I regret to say that we had a very distressing meeting here yesterday—a cruel scene. I fear very high words passed between us. I must avow that I have hardly that absolute command over my temper I could wish—it is constitutional, I suppose.

I trace the same defect, in a very aggravated form, in my son; but I persuaded him at last to seek you out. He found you at last, of course; he followed you, I presume, though it grew too late last night to do any good."

"But, Mr. Wood, I must really——"

"Yes, yes, quite right, my dear Mr. Page—may I say, Arnold? Surely yes. I knew your poor father intimately. I have known you quite from a child. My dear Arnold, then, you will require security: quite right; I prefer even that that should be so. I will join my son Hugh in a bond to secure to you the repayment of the advance. After all, the sum is a very small one, a mere bagatelle, though swollen with interest and law expenses." The Rector of Oakmere paused at length to take snuff from his handsome gold box, closing its lid with a sharp click, by way of full stop to his sentence, flourishing his yellow bandanna, while his weak grey eyes watched Arnold with a restless eagerness.

"I am sorry you would not permit me to interrupt you before—that you have not spared me the pain of this confidential communication. I have already stated there is some mistake—some misapprehension."

"You have not seen Hugh?" the rector asked, quite breathlessly.

"I saw him for a few minutes only, last night. But ——"

"He said nothing of my cruel position here; he did not solicit your assistance to extricate me?"

"No. He had hardly the opportunity of so doing. We were not alone—and even if he had——"

The rector stamped angrily upon the floor as he turned away from Arnold, and bringing his white fists down with a heavy thump upon the table, he made the fragments of red-herring, the dingy eggs, the battered service, and the black coffee-pot reel and shiver with his violence.

"That's Hugh all over, that's Hugh to the life—selfish, obstinate, pig-headed! He'd see his own father rot in a gaol, before he'd stir his little finger to aid him. What does he care! He was stayed, I suppose, by some infernal nonsense about obligation: or his wretched timidity and shyness, or some idiotic scruples of that sort. That's Hugh: meanwhile, I'm to go to the dogs. I'm to be ruined. I'm to die in the gutter. Who will care! I, a clergyman too—a Fellow of my college, before I

was fool enough to marry. It serves me right."

"Hush, hush, Mr. Wood. Pray be calm."

"And I'm sure I've not been extravagant." His wrath dwindled into peevish whining here. "I'm sure my own expenses are of the most moderate kind. No man could live more simply. It's seldom I take more than a pint of wine a day. I have speculated a little now and then, and been unfortunate. But my son's education has ruined me. His college bills, his thoughtless extravagance, his ruinous expenditure!"

"No, no, Mr. Wood," Arnold interrupted, gently, but firmly. "I knew Hugh at Oxford. We were in the same set. No one could have been more moderate, or temperate, or simple in his mode of life than he was: he set us all a good example."

"But you'll help me, Arnold, won't you?" the rector asked, suddenly changing the subject. "I well know you will. Your father's old friend—your neighbour and clergyman, the poor unhappy father of your old college friend, Hugh. You'll help me; a very small advance will help me out of this. And if I can only satisfy Moss, I'm sure I can arrange with the others. I know they

will give me time, or perhaps take a composition."

"I'm sorry to tell you, Mr. Wood, that I am more in the situation of one needing assistance than able to give it," Arnold said, gravely.

"What do you mean? Why are you here?"

"Like you, Mr. Wood, I'm arrested for debt."

The rector gave a long, low whistle. It was rather a vulgar method of expressing surprise, but he seemed able to divest himself at a very short notice of the elaborate artificial polish of manner in regard to which he had acquired some fame in certain circles.

"I have heard strange rumours about you down at Oakmere," he said, with some violence of tone; "but I hardly thought they could be true. You're badly hit, then? You've melted down that pretty little property the old general left? or is this only a stroke of ill-luck, which you'll get over? You won't stop here though, I suppose. Surely you can manage better than that?"

Certain it is, that either the consciousness of impecuniosity, or else the fusty atmosphere of a sponging-house, has a soiling effect upon most men. The Rev. Purton Wood spoke now with a jaunty coarseness of look and action, a disregard

of social conventions, an abandonment of all respect, both for himself and for others, that seemed to arise from long intimacy with debt and difficulty, and would have sat well on one of the most confirmed and permanent of prisoners in the Old Fleet or the abolished Bench.

"I have done what I believe to be the best, if not the only thing to be done by a man in my situation," said Arnold, drily. "I have sent for my solicitor."

"But your marriage will pull you, I should think," Mr. Wood continued; "that little Carr will have no end of money. It can't be true, that rumour I heard the other day, that the engagement between you was all off?"

Arnold made no reply. There was little need. Two visitors just then entered the room. One was Hugh Wood. He glanced uneasily from his father to Arnold.

"He knows all now," he muttered. He shook hands with Arnold, and then proceeded to listen to a long petulant address from his father, whispered in a corner of the room. He received a string of reproaches with much patience and forbearance, biting his lips the while, but saying little in reply. He brought *The Times* newspaper

for his father, and a packet of letters. The rector of Oakmere was soon busy tearing open the envelopes, perusing the contents through gold-rimmed glasses.

The other visitor was known to Arnold. He was young Mr. Hopegood, the solicitor, junior partner in the firm of Holroyd and Hopegood, Lincoln's Inn Fields. There was no longer a Mr. Holroyd in the firm; he had been dead some years. Old Mr. Hopegood and his son, young Mr. Hopegood, were the only partners. The latter gentleman was advancing towards middle age. A pleasant-looking, fresh-coloured, well-dressed man, who always wore bright kid gloves and a glossy hat, and took a pleasant view of his profession and of life generally. It always fell to his share of the business to attend clients placed in lugubrious positions, weighed down by Chancery suits, suffering under adverse verdicts, imprisoned for debt. His bright presence illuminated these tenebrous situations, just as a cheerful doctor benefits a depressed patient. His cheery view of his profession and of life stood him in good stead with clients in difficulties. You caught unconsciously something of his hopeful way of looking at things; and began to regard with him the Lord

Chancellor as rather a good joke than not; the Court of Bankruptcy as very like a picnic party, or private theatricals; and being locked in prison merely a form of change of air, and going out of town. He was a first-rate lawyer to consult in a sponging-house. The grimy coffee-room grew quite a gaily furnished apartment,—it might have looked on to a flower-garden instead of a narrow whitewashed bar-roofed yard—under young Mr. Hopegood's auspices. For the other branches of the profession, where dignity, solemnity, almost severity, were required—these invariably received the attention of Mr. Hopegood, senior, whose grave manner and silvered head had an imposing and quite pictorial effect at will-makings, the signing and sealing of heavy mortgages, and at weddings. It was quite as good as having a bishop at the altar, the securing Mr. Hopegood, senior, for the ceremonious scene of completing the settlements.

"How do you do, Mr. Page?" said Mr. Hopegood, junior, with easy grace. "I hope I see you quite well? I got your note but a quarter of an hour ago. You see I haven't lost any time. It doesn't do, you know, in these cases. Who'd have thought, you know, of meeting you here?

Well, well; you know stranger things than that have happened. Queer places these, ain't they? Convenient, though. Like a bad hotel, eh? Dear, and not too comfortable. Yes; the accommodation is not in proportion to the charges: two guineas a night, say. You never set foot in one of these places before? No, I daresay not. But they're dying out. We shall have no more lock-ups soon. It's quite worth while coming to see what they're like, while you can, before they're finally abolished. However, a few hours are quite enough, eh? I should think so. Well, about this little matter of yours. It's a great pity it should have happened; because one thing of this kind is generally sure to bring upon us a host of others; and then, you know, we shall be rather in a mess, or something very like it. Fortunately, this is but a small amount. And I'll see about it, and do my best, and you need be under no apprehension as to the result. I am glad you sent to us at once; because, in these cases, loss of time is loss of everything. To tell you the truth, I had rather an inkling of what was going on, and I was prepared for it. No, no; you mustn't put questions to lawyers; and you mustn't ask me what I'm going to do now. You must be content with the door being

opened, and your walking out a free man. Now, will you excuse me for half an hour? Will you try and amuse yourself for that time in this queer old place? That's right. I'll not be more than half an hour—perhaps not so much; and then you can say good-by to Mr. Solomon. Only" (he sunk his voice to a whisper here), "take care where you go! Be prudent for a short time. I daresay the storm will blow over: storms often do. I wouldn't go much to Sun-Dial Buildings just now, if I were you, nor down to Oakmere. I'm not sure that I would not try the sea-breezes across the Channel. Hush! Good-by!"

Mr. Hopegood, junior, waved his brightly gloved hand, and was gone.

The Rev. Purton Wood and his son were engaged in another part of the room. It seemed that the father had paused in the perusal of his letters to have a low-voiced explanation with Hugh relative to Arnold. Apparently Mr. Wood was satisfied that no blame could rest with his son. Indeed, Arnold's presence as a prisoner was a sufficient reason for no application for pecuniary aid having been made to him. The rector was more calm, less peevish, as he resumed his examination of his correspondence.

"This is from the bishop's secretary. I fancy I know the handwriting;" and Hugh pushed an unopened letter across the table to his father. "Yes; and surely that's the bishop's seal. The letter has been forwarded from Oakmere on to my chambers. It's marked *immediate*."

The rector snatched up the letter, inspected the seal through his glasses, then broke it hurriedly. He glanced over the writing.

"The archdeaconry of Binchester!" he cried, angrily. "What's the good of that to me? I won't take it! After waiting all these years, to be offered the archdeaconry of Binchester! The bishop ought to be ashamed of himself! I won't have it! Nothing shall induce me!"

"It's better than Oakmere, isn't it?" Hugh asked.

"Don't be a fool, Hugh!" his father said, warmly. "How can you ask such stupid questions? Yes, of course it's better than Oakmere. Nothing could be much worse than that. But it's not what the bishop ought to have done for me. It's most ungrateful of him—most disgraceful, after the years and years I've waited; and the man was my junior at Oxford; was my fag at Harrow. And he presumes to offer me the deanship of

Binchester! And he knows my situation—he must know it. How I've been pinched for money; cramped in every way for years. It's most insulting! Why, the Southernwoods would have done more for me, if I had only cultivated my acquaintance with them a little more. Why, Hugh, you used to know that little Lord Dolly. You must have met him often enough. You must know him quite well enough to ask him to give me something. There are some very good things —really good things in the gift of the family. Now he's the Marquis, he might be got to do me a good turn."

But the rector could detect little encouragement of this proposition in the face of his son. He turned again to the study of the bishop's letter.

"Not his own writing even," he muttered, gloomily. "Oh! the insolence of office! Employing his secretary to write to his old college friend! Well; I'd better accept it, I suppose. I believe it's worth a good deal; and, perhaps, if Moss were to see this he'd let me out. I'd give a new bill to include the judgment he's got on the last, and to have a small advance to go on with. There are some things I must pay before leaving Oakmere."

He mused over this for some time, abstractedly folding up the letter, weighing it in his hand, then tapping with a corner of it on the table. An idea seemed to occur to him. He looked up.

"By the by, Hugh—" he said—"stoop—lower. I don't want *them* to hear. There's another chance for you now—a good one. Do you know that Page's engagement with that little Carr is broken off?"

"Is this so?" asked Hugh, his breath very short, his face pale, his eyes wide open.

"Yes; Arnold almost said as much. And I heard it spoken of last Sunday at Oakmere. The girl's free. There's nothing to prevent you now going in and winning: only you mustn't lose time. There'll be plenty more after her. Indeed they say already that Lord Dolly's up at the castle sufficiently often. Of course the Carrs will try to hook the Marquis: but that doesn't signify. I'm sure a fine, tall, well-built young fellow, going in for the thing in style, would be safe to cut out that little whipper-snapper."

"It can't be true!" said Hugh, in an agitated voice, after a pause. "She loves Arnold: I'm sure of it. In any case, I haven't a chance, nor the ghost of one. It's folly to think of such a thing."

"You're an ass, and a coward, Hugh," his father said, passionately. "You expect everything to be done for you, and do nothing yourself. I'm sure I've toiled hard enough for you. I'm sick of it. What do you hope to get by hanging back like a cur? Do you think a pretty girl like that, with a load of money, will come and fall at your knees, and beg you to marry her? I'm ashamed of you!"

Hugh made no reply, though his lips trembled a little. A few minutes later his father said, in a more subdued tone—

"Well, you'd better go on to Moss; tell him what's happened. And make the best arrangement you can with him."

As his son quitted him, the rector unfolded *The Times*, and was soon fully occupied with the news of the day. Arnold walked up and down the room, humming a tune or chatting with Mr. Solomon (or his assistant, who always answered to that name: there was some mystery about the real Solomon, it was supposed; no one could indeed be quite sure that he had ever seen him, though many had heard of him). Arnold was deriving considerable amusement from the information concerning men and things, afforded

him by his Jewish janitor. There was novelty, if not absolute freshness, in views of life from a sheriff's officer's stand-point.

Mr. Hopegood, junior, returned within the time he had named. He was more cheerful than ever. He announced to Arnold that he was free.

"Only pray be careful," he said, pressing his gloved hand gently upon Arnold's arm, and with a subtle expression of face. "Pray be careful. Don't show too much. This is a trifle, and it's settled. By and by we may have to deal with more difficult matters. Take my advice, and keep quiet, out of the way. Go up that back street into Holborn, and take a cab. Good-by."

Arnold took leave of the rector of Oakmere; but he was so absorbed in his newspaper, that he hardly looked up.

"Good-by," he said, almost abstractedly. "I shall be out myself in half an hour, at the most. Hugh's now settling with Moss."

It was rather pleasant, Arnold thought, even after so very brief a term of captivity, to hear the iron-clamped door of the lock-up close noisily, and to know that he was on the free side of it. He drew a long breath; there seemed to be more air in Cursitor Street that morning, he fancied,

than usual—air of a quite pure, bracing, healthful character. Perhaps it was by contrast with the atmosphere of Mr. Solomon's house, which was certainly rather loaded and thick.

"Arnold," cried some one behind him, as he turned out of Cursitor Street. He looked round with a start. In another moment he was shaking hands heartily with Robin Hooper, who had limped hurriedly up to him.

"My dear Arnold," cried his friend fervidly, "how glad I am to see you! I have hardly slept a wink for thinking of you. I've been planning all sorts of ways of helping you. But you're free, Arnold? You're sure you are?"

"It looks like it, Rob, doesn't it?" Arnold said with a smile. "My manacles have been struck off. Would you like to see the terrible marks they've left on my wrists?"

They crossed Holborn, turning down Gray's Inn gateway, to avoid the noise, for they could scarcely hear themselves speak. They were soon walking up and down the large quiet barrack-yard-looking square of Gray's Inn.

"I was going, Arnold, if you'd have let me, and indeed you must have,—I was going to write down to the old dad at home, Arnold. He's plenty

of money, though he doesn't much care to part with it. But he would in such a case as this; I'll answer for him. He'd have been glad to help you."

"You're very kind, Rob; but Hopegood has managed it. I hardly know how. It was a small affair, but," he added wearily, "I fear it's the beginning of greater mischief. I wish I could see to the end of it all; but I can't."

"What do you mean, Arnold?" asked Robin, looking up appealingly into his face.

"I mean ruin, Rob," he said simply, very sadly. He felt Robin's hold upon his arm tighten: then that a tremble ran through the poor cripple's frame as he said, in a moved voice.

"Not ruin, Arnold; don't say that. I know that there has been of late much to make you unhappy. I have watched your face sometimes when you have forgotten my presence. I could see that there has been something distressing you terribly. You have smiled with an effort, and there has been not quite a true ring about your gaiety. I have asked no questions. It was not for me to add to your pain by pressing upon your wounds. You have been cruelly used, tricked, cheated of your happiness. I did not think that she would stoop to such conduct. But——"

"Not a word against her," Arnold interrupted with some warmth. "The engagement is at an end by my doing, not hers. I released her from her promise because, as an honest man, I could not ask for its fulfilment. She is free, free to give herself to whom she will. God grant that she may be happy in her choice; she can be nothing more to me: we are parted for ever."

"And you love her still? Yes, I see you do; and the engagement is over, with no chance of its renewal?"

"With no hope whatever. Don't ask me more, Rob. I have told you all I can. It is my own doing. I have been foolish, weak, mad—yet try to think as well of me as you can. I may not tell you more. There is a secret, but it is not wholly mine. Pity her, poor child! pity us both. But think of our love as over for ever." And Arnold turned away his head.

"Yes," said Robin, pensively, "this is ruin indeed."

"Don't let us speak of this subject again, Rob. Accept it as settled. I hardly intended to have said so much. But it is right you should know that she is blameless. Don't let any one accuse her, Rob. They may say what they will of me,

they are welcome to, and indeed I deserve all that can be said. But not one word against my poor Leo! I may have seemed to you cold about my love—to have trifled with it. But indeed I loved her, Rob. Perhaps I did not know how fervently until now. We won't speak of this again. Fortunately I have many things now to occupy me. I am deeply involved, Rob, I fear. Heaven knows whether I shall save anything out of the wreck of my fortune."

"But you have friends, Arnold, who will do all in their power to assist you."

"I mustn't make bad worse, Rob. I must not pull down those who hold out helping hands to me. I must bear my troubles as I can. Give up everything and start afresh in the world, as hundreds of men have done before me. That reminds me. Where are we going—what am I to do? I am told not to go near the Temple, nor down to Oakmere, for fear of arrest. I must take lodgings somewhere; or I must ask some friend to give me house-room for a few days."

"Let me see," says Rob, meditatively; "there's Lackington, at Camden Town." Then he remembered that Lackington's opinions expressed on the previous night might not sound very pleasantly in

Arnold's ears; and he doubted the painter's discretion in the matter of outspeaking. "Yes, it would be the very thing," he cried out suddenly, "if you wouldn't mind."

"Mind what, Rob?"

"Why, they're rather shabby, and humble, and the neighbourhood's not a very nice one. But I think you'd be comfortable, and you'd have Phil Gossett for company; and no one can help liking Phil, though, perhaps, his piccolo is rather a nuisance to an unmusical man. I mean Mrs. Simmons's lodgings in Coppice Row."

Arnold thought the proposition an admirable one.

"It's so important that he shouldn't be left alone," Robin said to himself, "and I can trust Phil; and no one will dream of looking for Page of Oakmere in Coppice Row."

They found Mrs. Simmons in deep crape, her face less rubicund than ever, notwithstanding the contrast afforded by her large new widow's cap with its long floating lappets in front.

"You're very kind to think of me, Mr. Hooper, in my trouble. It's like you. I'm sure I'll do all I can to make Mr. Page comfortable. Oh, yes, I've plenty of room in the house. Lodgers are

fond of clearing out the minute a death happens in a place. And I've been so ill myself that I could barely stand or speak. My poor Jemmy's death was so shocking sudden. But we shall get on better now the inquest is over; they buried him this morning, a simple funeral, but crowds of the profession followed. People have been very kind to me. Nothing can equal Mr. Gossett's goodness; nothing. Never so much as laid a finger on his piano the whole week. And the sweet letter I had from that dear Miss Gill; it would do your heart good to read it. I suppose she saw the paragraph in the paper. A very nice paragraph it was. Certainly, poor Jemmy was a beautiful dancer as a young man. I never saw his equal. He was not a good husband; and it was the drink that carried him off at last. I used to talk to him pretty sharply when he was here. I can't help feeling sorry for it now, though I know he deserved every word of it and more; he didn't use me well, but I've been so miserable since he's gone that I've hardly known what to do. Yes, I'm in hopes we shall get on pretty well. The children are wonderfully clever with the newspapers and publications. I think we shall be able to manage, though we shall miss him terribly

at first. Poor Jemmy! It quite brings the tears into my eyes only to mention his name. To think that there's his Scotch bonnet hanging up, and he'll never again be able to put his head in it! I'm not in the bill of the Paroquet until the day after to-morrow; they've been very considerate. It will be hard at first taking off my crape and going into colours. I'm to play in the *Maid of the Wreck*. I quite dread it. I wouldn't mind so much if it was a laughing part: but it's a piece with a strong crying interest, and the audience will expect to have their feelings worked upon tremendously, and if I once begin crying I know I shall think of my poor Jemmy, and my nerves will give way, and I shan't be able to recover myself. One thing, there's enough to occupy one with all these children's mouths to feed and the lodgers to attend to, and my parts to learn, and the job to make both ends meet. No, sir, Mr. Gossett's not in at present. I expect him in the afternoon."

So Mr. Arnold Page, of Oakmere Court, became a lodger in the house of Mrs. Simmons, of Coppice Row.

CHAPTER II.

TEARS.

The Lomax household seems to have been going on much in its usual way. The customary eight o'clock breakfast; the departure of Mr. Lomax to his Whitehall office by the express train; the children's dinner at one o'clock, when Mrs. Lomax takes her luncheon—generally a substantial one; the return of Mr. Lomax from the performance of his official duties; a stroll about the gardens and grounds; the late dinner at seven, coffee at nine, and then to bed. A change on Sundays. The dinner-hour earlier; and attendance at the two services at Oakmere Church; otherwise, the daily programme of the family, as above set forth, was strictly adhered to week after week throughout the year. There might be slight incidental interruptions of this simple line of conduct; but even these were barely of sufficient importance to distinguish one day from another. There were walks, and rides, and drives,

and the interchange of ceremonious visits with the families of the gentry in the neighbourhood. Now and then there were visitors staying in the house, but seldom more than one or two at the same time, though the old house could almost have lodged a garrison. Arnold would come down from town for a few days now and then; but he always seemed glad to hurry back again, and was, indeed, while at Oakmere, incessantly occupied, sitting up late at night over his papers and writings, and very anxious about his letters when the letter-bag came in from the post-office. "Mr. Harnold don't get on well with Lomax, and no wonder either," the footmen agreed amongst themselves. Mrs. Lomax's headaches had been more and more frequent, increasing so much of late that her maid had given warning. Mr. Lomax was less agreeable than of old: he had grown nervous, and fidgety, and petulant. The spring of his affable, jocose manner seemed to have broken; or there was a screw loose somewhere in its machinery; anyhow, it did not work nearly so well; it was nothing like so comfortably under control as it used to be. The butler remarked, too, that he had taken to drinking a great deal more wine after dinner

than had been usual with him, and he seemed to suffer from an extraordinary antipathy to strangers. The appearance of some unknown person advancing along the carriage drive set him trembling dreadfully, and swearing and screaming to his servants that he was not at home to any one, and that he was not to be interrupted on any account whatever.

Perhaps the most unchanged inmates of the house were little Edith and Rosy, late pupils of Miss Bigg, who were enjoying the incoming spring exceedingly.

Outside the Court house there were but few events of interest to be registered. There had been some marvelling throughout the parish at the repeated absences of the Rev. Purton Wood, and a whisper was floating about to the effect that his son had been "going on" rather in London, giving the excellent rector a great deal of trouble. A picturesque addition to Oakmere churchyard had excited much admiration. Miss Carr had erected a white marble cross to the memory of the late Barbara Gill. There had been objections taken at first by some of the most severely critical of the villagers, to the effect that the memorial was "papish." But it was agreed,

at length, that, under all the circumstances of the case, the objection should not be persisted in. A simple inscription set forth the name and the dates of the birth and death of Captain Gill's daughter and Barbara.

And there had been another change. Miss Gill had quitted Croxall Chase, in spite of the earnest entreaties of the Carrs. She had undertaken the duties of governess in the family of Mr. Lomax. Her rate of remuneration was moderate, extremely moderate; Mrs. Lomax herself admitted as much. But then, as she urged, it was the first situation that Miss Gill had undertaken. She brought no character of any kind with her to Oakmere. Her presence at Croxall was only attributable to what Mrs. Lomax must really call a piece of Quixotism on the part of Leonora Carr, who seemed to take quite a pleasure in doing odd and eccentric things. Some of them very questionable in point of taste (but, then, how she had been brought up; her own way in every thing!) Miss Gill was probably competent; but Mrs. Lomax had no guarantee or assurance to that effect. None knew really anything about her, and it was feared that some of her relations were quite disreputable people. But after the disgrace-

ful manner in which Miss Bigg had behaved, it was clearly impossible that the children could be again trusted to her care; and there was a sort of charity in employing Miss Gill; though her position at the Court could, of course, only be regarded as experimental—and so on. Mrs. Lomax had a good deal to say upon the subject. Perhaps one chief reason of the engagement was comprised in the fact that Miss Carr was strongly opposed to Janet going to Oakmere Court.

"What does that little Leo mean by interfering in matters in which she can have no possible concern?" Mrs. Lomax demanded. And instantly she acquiesced in proposals which had originated with Janet. Mrs. Lomax was in great doubt at first as to the light in which she should regard her new governess. She was inclined to dislike her, from the fact of her long sojourn at the Chase under the protection of the Carrs. "But she seems a modest, gentle girl; pale, nice-looking; a very creditable governess in appearance, ladylike and retiring; and she manages the children well, and they certainly seem to like her." So, upon the whole, Mrs. Lomax decided that her governess was a treasure; and having made up her mind on the subject she retired to her boudoir to lie down,

and nurse and make much of one of her own patent and peculiar headaches.

Leo had strongly combated Janet's notion of becoming a governess, and especially in the household of the Lomax's. "She won't appreciate you, Janet. She can't," Leo declared, in reference to Mrs. Lomax. "I don't like her, although she *is* Arnold's sister. I have tried to, very hard indeed, but I can't manage it; and I don't think that you'll be able to either, my Janet. But mind, you must promise me that if you are not happy there, or if she ever says a word to you that she ought not to say, you will come back here again, mind that. This is your home, Janet, never forget that; and I'm your sister, dear, now;" and she drew Janet towards her and nestled her head upon Janet's shoulder—there was a wonderful intermingling of golden and rich brown tresses—and kissed Janet's pale cheeks so heartily that there rose through their surface quite a flush of warm colour. "But, indeed," she went on, "I don't see why you need quit us at all, why you can't stop with us always—when we've all grown to be so fond of you, Janet. I never saw mamma take such a fancy to any one as she has taken to you. I won't say anything about myself, because, you know, I'm no one.

Only I shall miss you dreadfully if you go, you naughty, beautiful, cruel, darling Janet."

"I must go, Leo," Janet said simply, with a tremor in her soft voice. "For many reasons it is not right that I should remain here idle. I must do my duty. It is only fitting that, placed as I am, I should seek to earn my own living. Don't think me ungrateful, Leo; I shall never forget your kindness to me; and, above all, to her who has been taken from us. I shall never cease to thank you for that. I shall always owe you a great debt of gratitude. For Mrs. Lomax, I have every cause to be thankful that she has engaged me at all. I was fortunate to learn that she contemplated engaging a governess for her children. I will endeavour to do my duty. They seem nice, clever children. I don't think I shall have any difficulty in regard to them."

"If Edith and Rosy don't treat you well, Janet, tell me, and I'll see to them. I think I could make those girls afraid of me if I chose," said Leo, with a severe air; and then she kissed her friend, and tied round her neck a small gold cross—gold and turquoise—which Janet was bidden ever to keep for Leo's sake.

Finally Janet quitted Croxall Chase and took up her residence at Oakmere Court.

The dog-cart started from the Court regularly in the afternoon to meet Mr. Lomax at the railway station. One day, however, Mr. Lomax did not arrive by the train he ordinarily came down by. The servant who had brought over the dog-cart was a little at a loss to know what to do; whether to drive back to the Court or to wait at the station the arrival of the next train.

"If I stop here," he argued, "I may be wanted up at the house, and get a wigging for loitering; and if I go off I may miss master, and if he has to walk over, or to hire a trap, there be the deuce and all to pay."

Influenced, perhaps, by the popular delusion to the effect that beer quickens the intelligence, or moved by the maxim which instructs men in doubt to have a drink, he sauntered over to the Railway Hotel—a small, terribly new-looking, whitey-brown brick-built public-house—to refresh himself with a glass of Woodlandshire ale.

Just then he heard his name loudly vociferated by one of the porters attached to the station. He turned: a letter was handed to him. It had been brought down by the guard of the London train:

he had received it from one of the messengers of the Wafer Stamp Office. The letter was marked upon the outside, "To be delivered, immediately." It was in Mr. Lomax's handwriting, addressed to his wife. The servant rode rapidly back to the Court with the letter. It was brought to Mrs. Lomax, nursing her headache in her boudoir. We will take the liberty of looking over her shoulder as she reads. A few lines only, hurriedly written, hurriedly blotted.—

"My dearest Georgina,—

"Circumstances have occurred which will detain me in London this evening. Don't be under any alarm. Business matters which I cannot leave. I shall dine at the club, and get a bed most likely at Long's. Treat the thing as a matter of course. Don't let the servants or the neighbours see you uneasy. If by any chance Arnold should be with you, tell him *on no account to go near* the Temple. I will write again if I should be unable to see you to-morrow. Kiss the children for me.

"Ever, my dearest Georgina,

"Your affectionate husband,

"Francis L. Chalker Lomax."

"*Wafer Stamp Office, Whitehall,*

"*4 o'clock, Friday.*"

Mrs. Lomax, when there was no one looking at her, was not very readily alarmed. She read her husband's letter through twice, without much emotion—without turning a hair, to use a sporting phrase. She did not even alter her reclining attitude upon the sofa as she read. Certainly she did not start to her feet after the manner of impressionable people receiving a communication of more or less importance.

"Office business, I suppose," she said at last. "What else can it be? I suppose it's more pressing than usual, or Frank would not have written in this tone." And she rang the bell: her maid entered from the adjoining dressing-room.

"Pull up that blind, Morris. I don't think the sun comes in now. My head is a little better. Put the eau-de-Cologne nearer. I will have a cup of tea when the children have theirs. Be kind enough to tell Miss Gill so, and the dinner need not be served to-day. I don't feel equal to it, and Mr. Lomax is detained in town on business. He will not be able to come down to-night. That will do, Morris."

"Frank is really too conscientious. He is quite a martyr to his office," Mrs. Lomax said to herself. "I am sure I don't know why he should wear

himself out in this way. Government won't thank him one bit the more. Government won't do anything the more for him. But really he seems to have quite a passion for work. He will make himself seriously ill if he goes on like this. He is really too conscientious."

She had so frequently made use of this set form of speech that it seemed at last as though she seriously believed in its truth. She had found it effective to rustle about in society representing her husband as the victim of official toil. People were permitted to imagine that the Government of the country was in a great measure carried on by Mr. Lomax, and that he was in some way, no one clearly understood how, a member of the Cabinet, though his name did not appear publicly in the official lists. But Mrs. Lomax was *au fait* at certain of the secrets of social success: she knew that if you assumed a high tone, and were sufficiently vague in your statements, the people around, decidedly impressed, would draw upon their fancy a good deal concerning you, crediting you with a vast amount of importance: for a good many are reverent in such matters precisely in proportion as they are ignorant.

Mrs. Lomax took a cup of tea in the school-room

with the governess and the children. It enabled her to study Miss Gill a little more for one thing. But she said little; languidly rebuking Rosy once or twice for clattering with her teaspoon. The repast concluded, Mrs. Lomax retired again to her boudoir, and listlessly examined the last packet of books from the library.

"Yes, Miss Gill is decidedly pretty. Beautiful, Arnold says; but that's absurd; men who set up for possessing taste are for ever committing themselves to such extravagant opinions. With more colour and style she would certainly be very prepossessing. She seems unconscious of her good looks; one sometimes finds that in persons of her class: they are unaware of how much mischief they might do to man, as they say horses are. I think her system of education is good. She saves me a great deal of trouble, and she never answers me; and how important that is in one's dependants and inferiors."

At her usual hour Mrs. Lomax retired to rest. She was not haunted by any unpleasant dreams; she was not hindered from sleep by any terrible fancies affecting her husband; she passed a very comfortable night. Probably she was satisfied that Frank was able to take care of himself. Certainly,

however, she was unaware that a strange rumour was going round the village; something to the effect that two strange men were stopping at the Crown Inn, armed with instructions from the sheriff of Woodlandshire, touching the arrest of Mr. Lomax. The rumour might or might not be true; the Crown Inn was much disapproved of among the gentry of the neighbourhood; the landlord was discountenanced: he was branded as "ill-conditioned," and his house denounced as the eyesore of the village. The Crown had been a reputable house once, but it had been demoralized by the workpeople when the railway skirted Oakmere, and had never been reputable since; had been the scene of Saturday-night revels; many "navvy" dances, fights, and frolics, that had shocked the propriety of the parish; and it was said that the landlord (J. Skittler) had left off attending church and devoted himself to betting on horse-racing, card-playing, and other low pursuits.

It was soon after breakfast on the following morning that Leo's pony was to be seen cantering along the avenue leading to the Court. Rosy Lomax escaped from her French irregular verbs to hurry to the entrance and greet Leo warmly after her manner.

"How are you, Rosy," Leo said, as she descended—then to the groom, "Walk him about, George, please, he's very warm." She entered the house. "It's mamma I want to see, Rosy. I want to see her at once: I shall find her upstairs, I suppose? Don't you come? I know you're playing truant from Miss Gill. I know the way."

She gathered the long skirts of her habit skilfully together, and hurried upstairs. She was encountered by Morris, who was compelled—the young lady would take no denial—to lead her at once to Mrs. Lomax's boudoir. Morris had faintly suggested Miss Carr's waiting in the drawing-room until Mrs. Lomax could see her. But Miss Carr had thrust this proposition abruptly on one side.

Indeed, there was something peremptory about Miss Carr's manner this morning. Her brows were clouded, her eyes were bright, her lips were compressed closely, and the colour of her cheeks had gathered into two angry patches; she was otherwise very pale. She hurried into the boudoir.

"Excuse my disturbing you so early," she said at once to Mrs. Lomax, without further greeting, laying—flinging rather—her riding whip on the table and tearing off her fawn-coloured gauntlets;

"but I was anxious to see you as soon as possible."

"Not quite so loud, Leo, please," cried Mrs. Lomax, with an affected air of drowsy entreaty; "think of my poor head—and I have had a very disturbed night. You can go, Morris;" and then she asked herself, "What can the child possibly want? How rude she is! What does she mean by disturbing me in this way?"

"Where is Arnold?" Leo asked, with some suddenness, and without much heed to Mrs. Lomax's appeal.

"I don't know, indeed," Mrs. Lomax answered. "Who should know, if you do not? I seldom see him—seldom hear from him. He seems to have quite forgotten that he has a sister, ever anxious about him. But why do you ask, Leo? What is the matter? Why do you look at me so strangely?"

"There is some mystery about Arnold. What is it?"

"My dear child, you are applying to the very worst person in the world for information on such a subject. I am sorry to say that I know very little indeed of Arnold's movements. Do not *you* hear from him? Has he not written to *you* even?"

"Yes," said Leo, and her lips trembled as she spoke. "He has written to me at last. I heard from him this morning." She undid some of the hooks of her riding-habit, and took a letter from her bosom. "The post brought me *this*," she went on. "It is in reference to it that I have come on here at once—as quickly as I could. Plainly, I don't understand the letter." She laid it before her on the table.

Mrs. Lomax peered at her visitor through her half-closed eyelids. She noted—not without an ill-repressed smile of satisfaction, it must be admitted—that there was a strange tremor in her voice; that the sparkle in her eyes might arise from tears—it was not easy to be certain on the subject, because the flap of her hat threw the upper part of her face into shadow—that her bosom was heaving quickly, angrily. It did not seem as though the aperture left where the hooks of the riding-habit had been unfastened could be closed again very readily, there was such a raging storm within.

"I shall be happy if I can assist you in any way," Mrs. Lomax said, drawlingly. "I can generally read Arnold's writing pretty well. His meaning is generally clear enough. May I look

at the letter?" And she put forth her hand to take it.

A look of pain crossed Leo's face: a look of anger: then, with a nervous, jealous eagerness, she seized the letter again, and thrust it back into her bosom, and held her hand over it as though to protect and keep it there.

"No," she said, with something of a childlike simplicity in her tone; very soft now, though, full of deep, suppressed feeling. "No; I couldn't bear any one to read it but myself. It's all mine. I couldn't let you see it. Perhaps Arnold wouldn't like it." She was obliged to raise her hand to her face now; the tears had overflowed her eyes, clustered on her long close silky lashes, swung there for a moment, then fell, making a course for themselves down her cheeks, dripping finally on to the bosom of her riding-habit, just over the place where the letter was hid—the letter that had caused her grief. "It's a cruel letter," Leo said, "a cruel letter."

"I'm sure Arnold would write nothing improper," Mrs. Lomax observed stiffly, as she watched, not sympathetically, the tears drop down, one by one.

Leo checked herself, clenching her hands as though to struggle sturdily with her weakness.

"Arnold would do nothing that is unworthy, I know that," she said, firmly; "no one better. I can't show you this letter, Mrs. Lomax. But I will tell you plainly, shortly, what it is about. Plainly, then, it puts an end to my engagement with Arnold. All is to be *broken off* between us. I believe that is the correct term to employ. This is not much to you, Mrs. Lomax; but it is a great deal to me. I remember you one day confessed to me that it would not be greatly disagreeable to you if the engagement were so to end; that you were inclined to think that Arnold might have made a better choice; to fancy that he had been mistaken in the state of his feelings to me. Is it not natural for me now to inquire as to the share you may have had in bringing about a result you were candid enough to own you desired?"

"Indeed, Leo——"

"Have you influenced Arnold in any way? Answer me simply, please."

"I have not," said Mrs. Lomax, cowed a little by the stern tone of her visitor, by her almost imperious manner.

"You greatly overrate any influence that I may have over my brother," Mrs. Lomax continued.

"How could I induce him to take such a step? By what possible means? Such a thing could not be."

"You are right. It could not be," Leo said, musingly.

"I am surprised at the news you bring, as I am shocked, pained. However much I may have regretted the step Arnold took in entering upon this unhappy engagement, I was prepared to wait and to accept its issue cheerfully when the proper time arrived. Certainly I would not have interfered, upon any consideration, to disturb an arrangement deliberately come to, and on which your happiness so greatly depended. I may have spoken to you with more candour than was judicious; but pray acquit me of resorting to any underhand measures to attain an end I desired, I admit, but I certainly did not expect."

Leo bowed her head. Amidst Mrs. Lomax's regrets and protestations, there was an undertone of triumph that was very hard to listen to patiently, while yet there was little in her remarks to which exceptions could fairly be taken.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Lomax, if I have spoken too hastily. It is only natural that I should endeavour to discover why Arnold desires to end our engagement."

"Does the letter assign no reason?"

"It speaks of an inevitable necessity, of unforeseen difficulties, to which he is compelled to yield."

"I hope that this may be so."

"You doubt it then?" Leo asked, quickly.

"No. Only it is strange, I think, that we should neither of us have heard anything of these unforeseen difficulties, this inevitable necessity. What can he mean?"

Leo's breath was very short. Her heart beat so loudly, she pressed her hand upon her side as though to still it.

"Arnold would not lie!" she said, with clenched teeth.

Mrs. Lomax was silent.

"Arnold would not lie!" Leo repeated. "Something serious has happened, or he would not write thus to me. I have never doubted his truth. I do not doubt it now. If our engagement is to end, I believe it will pain him almost as much as it will pain me. But why should it end? What can interfere to prevent it? And yet the terms of the letter are clear enough. Too, too clear! He speaks of parting from me for ever, says we can never more be to each other as we have

been. Tells me I am free, and trusts that I may be happy. Happy! and never to see him more! What have I done that he should write like this to me?"

"I am very sorry for you, Leo," said Mrs. Lomax; and she was so far wrought upon by the poor girl's passion as to rise, take from the mantel-piece a *flacon* of eau-de-Cologne, and push it towards her.

Faint sympathy is as damning as faint praise. For Leo's heart-ache, Mrs. Lomax proffered the consolation of—scent on her pocket-handkerchief! But the poor girl only drew fresh courage from the covert insolence of this attempt at condolence, as brave hearts always grow braver in the hour of trial.

"I do wrong to give way like this," she said, recovering command over herself. "I am forgetting where I am, to whom I am speaking. And you can tell me nothing, then? You know nothing of these difficulties to which your brother alludes?"

"Nothing, Leo; unless——"

"Unless what?"

"You will pardon me, Leo, for a suggestion that may seem little flattering to yourself. But

you know why most matches are broken off? Because, as time goes on, the parties concerned discover that they have overvalued their regard for each other; or rather, that they have mistaken what was simply regard, for love. Unfortunately, too, men are very fickle—they outgrow their emotions very rapidly; indeed, they are too apt to transfer their attachments. They bow low before one altar to-day: before another to-morrow."

"You would have me infer——"

"I am merely—in the bewilderment of this affair—suggesting a solution; doubtless far-fetched and improbable. But Arnold *may* love another."

Leo winced, as though from a lash.

"It is not possible," she said, in a choked voice.

"Pardon me," Mrs. Lomax continued. "You mean not *probable*—it is quite possible that Arnold may have formed another attachment. How little we really know of the conduct, resorts, modes of life, of our brothers and sons living away from us! Who can tell into what indiscretions Arnold's life alone in London may have betrayed him! He is certainly of a susceptible nature, keenly alive to the perilous fascinations of beauty. Young, handsome, rich, a favourite in society, courted on all

sides, might he not fall an easy prey to the arts and manœuvres of some designing woman? Upon what paltry inducements have men been known to make sacrifice of their every hope of happiness!"

"This is not true of Arnold," said Leo.

"I wish I could share your confidence, my dear Leo. I fear, in these matters, Arnold is inclined to be weak. He has something of an artistic—a poetic temperament, a sense of the beautiful, only too readily appealed too, too easily led captive. It was only the other day I heard him—but, perhaps, it is mischievous to repeat what, after all, can only be a trifling matter, an affair without serious meaning, though really, in his situation, he should have been more discreet.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Lomax?"

"As I have been so unfortunate as to commence I suppose I must conclude; but it may be nothing, after all. Pray don't let it distress you, Leo. I heard him speak, the other day, of the beauty of the governess of my children—of Miss Gill—in terms of the most extravagant eulogy; employing quite a lover's words, with quite a lover's manner——"

Mrs. Lomax stopped with a startled look. They both turned, attracted by a slight noise at the

door. Their gaze fell upon the figure of Janet Gill standing in the doorway. Her face was scarlet: it was evident that she had unintentionally overheard Mrs. Lomax's speech, had become aware of the story of Arnold's admiration.

She had approached the boudoir of Mrs. Lomax upon some mission connected with her charge of Edith and Rosy. "Would it disturb Mrs. Lomax if they were now to commence their practising, or should they first take their morning walk, or should Miss Edith now have her singing lesson?" Mrs. Lomax and Leo had been so engaged in their conversation that they had not been conscious for some moments of the presence of Janet. Her cheek was still flushed, her whole frame trembling, when, having received an answer to her inquiry, she regained the schoolroom.

"Mamma's been scolding her," Rosy whispered to her sister. "I knew she was cross; I could see she was when I went in to say good morning."

"It was unfortunate that she should be so near when I had occasion to mention her name," Mrs. Lomax re-commenced, when Janet had withdrawn. "I don't think, though, that she could have heard me; I was speaking very low."

Perhaps Leo had her own opinions upon the subject: she said nothing. The interruption had the effect of terminating an interview, which Leo now regretted she had ever sought; but she had yielded to her first impulse to seek to gain news of Arnold from his sister. She now perceived that no good could be gained by prolonging the conversation. Mrs. Lomax administered further doses of that sort of consolation which rather irritates than soothes suffering: she expressed abundant hopes that all might yet be well, for Leo's sake and for Arnold's, while her looks and manner were in flat contradiction of her speech. Finally, they parted, with that icy cordiality prevalent in cases where people are on very intimate terms while they dislike each other particularly, notwithstanding.

The pony had it all his own way on the road back to the Chase. He walked on leisurely, permitting himself even to stumble, now and then, in a slovenly, sluggish way, without receiving the punishment of the whip Leo usually awarded on such occasions, and which the pony was something astonished at not receiving. But she was lost in thought.

"Yes; she is very beautiful. If he should

have ceased to love me—if he should love Janet!" And she shivered.

She reached home, and saw the pony led away to the stable; still she did not enter the house. She remained for some time leaning against the pillars of the entrance, her eyes fixed upon the horizon, but without speculation in them; they were possessed by her cares, they were dimmed with tears. Over all one thought was ruling her absolutely, coming to her in different shapes and ways, presenting itself in new aspects, under all sorts of disguises; then, in a moment, baring itself again, falling upon her with its first terrible force —each blow striking her in the same one vulnerable place, with still the same agonizing dread.

"If he should not love me; if he should love Janet!"

There was a sort of clockwork regularity in the way this thought came to her, was dismissed, returned again, again and again. It pained her terribly; she quite writhed under it. She who had known so little sorrow: to whom grief was as appalling as it was new. And this thought that would not quit her, that seemed to rob her of all hope of happiness, that wounded her self-esteem so mercilessly, that deprived her of her trust in Arnold, in his truth

and honour, in his love! That gone, it seemed to her that she should lose with it all sense of right, all faith in justice, all belief in good. If for one moment she was able to clutch firmly at the hope —"He is true, he never could deceive me!" somehow she let it go again, directly afterwards, with a moan—"If he should not love me, if he should love Janet!"

It was so inexplicable that he should abandon her with this cruel abruptness; that "unforeseen difficulties" should arise. What difficulties? If he loved her still there could be no difficulties interfering to prevent her happiness. "But if he did not love her"—indeed it seemed the only reasonable explanation of his letter; but how agonizing the thought was!

Still in her riding-habit, she left the entrance and strolled into the flower-garden, now standing still as a stone for some minutes, now walking hurriedly, lashing the flowers with her whip, pale and angry, or tearing her gloves into strips. Then she entered the house to change her dress, pausing first to read once more that strange, dreadful letter. It grew quite crumpled and worn, that letter—it had been folded and unfolded, read and re-read, so often. She read it again, crying over it passionately.

She had dismissed her maid and locked her door, purposely to surrender herself to her sorrow. Then she smoothed her hair, and washed from her face the traces of her tears, peering into her mirror to ascertain whether her eyelids were so swollen and red as to betray her. Then she read the letter, and cried again.

"How cruel he is!" she moaned piteously, with a child's simplicity. "If he knew how it pains me, this horrid letter, he would never have written it. He never could."

Then she so longed to tell some one of it. She could not bear to keep this secret horror locked in her own poor heart; it seemed to be burning its way out, gnawing its bonds as it were, and struggling to be free. How precious, too, would sympathy be to her—real sympathy, the sympathy of some one who loved her, who would lighten her grief by sharing it, who would pour oil into her wounds, whisper hope in her ears, and so lull her to peace and rest again! And who could do this, if her mother could not?

She entered the room usually occupied by Mrs. Carr—a handsomely furnished room, from which Mrs. Carr now seldom stirred, for she had aged very much of late, was crippled by rheumatism,

was drowsy and listless. She occupied a large cushioned chair, placed midway between the window, when the sun was shining into the room, and the fireplace, and deriving warmth from both. For she was constantly complaining of cold now; and, indeed, had grown rather querulous and peevish altogether.

Leo kissed her mother affectionately, and was then made to draw a chair nearer and listen to a long story about the old lady's ailments, intermingled with a lamentation concerning the advantage taken of these by the household, to neglect their duties. Mrs. Carr took her daughter's little hands, and caressed them as she spoke, and then wandered into reminiscences of her dead son, and forebodings that she should never live to see her daughter married to Arnold. "Why did Arnold stay so long away? Why did he never come to see them now?" And Leo found she could not speak to her mother on the subject. She could not be sure of her attention, still less of her sympathy, for Mrs. Carr controlled and concentrated her ideas now with difficulty. "She will not understand me. Poor mamma!" and she kissed and quitted her.

"I don't know what's come to Leo," the old

lady said to herself; "the child's very different of late. I suppose she feels moped down here. There are no companions of her own age now that nice good girl, Miss Gill, has left us. I think she was foolish to go to Mrs. Lomax, who won't use her well. But, poor thing, I dare say she felt a want of occupation after the death of her sister. She had just the coloured hair that Jordan was so fond of. If Leo falls ill I must send at once for Dr. Hawkshaw. I'm sure he's done me more good than any one. But I'm a poor ailing old woman, now. I'm not long for this world I fear. Perhaps this place doesn't agree with me. I always told Carr it was damp. But he will have it that it's so beautifully drained. Men are so obstinate." She rang the bell. "I'll have my arrowroot now," she said to the servant, "with just a teaspoonful of brandy—and—put coals on. Why don't you look to the fire when you come into the room."

Leo wandered through the large house, in a mournful, objectless way, pausing here to open her work-box, there to take down a book from a shelf; now to scribble with a pencil in her drawing-book; now to strike a few chords or play a fragment of a tune on the piano. At last she

entered the library. Her father was bending over the newspaper, reading sedulously through his double glasses, after his wont. He looked up, and nodded to her kindly as she approached.

"Well, my little Leo, and what can I do for you?" he asked, and he circled her with his arm, and drew her towards him. "Have you come to cheer up poor old papa in his study? Give me a kiss, my darling."

"Oh, papa, I'm very, very sad," she said, and her eyes filled again with tears.

"Why, what a sigh. Sad? What, you, my Leo? No, it isn't possible. What's the matter? Is the pony gone lame?"

"About Arnold, papa," and she nestled close to him, and laid her head on his shoulder, while she took his hand and pressed it to her lips.

"What about Arnold, dearest?" he asked, in a more serious tone.

"He has written to me—read;" and she drew the letter again from her bosom. Mr. Carr resumed his glasses. She shifted her position a little, so that she might the better watch his face as he read.

Mr. Carr slowly perused the letter, dwelling, as it seemed, upon some of the words in it: then laid it on the desk before him.

"Well, papa?" she cried, gazing into his face with a piteous look of inquiry.

"You are right, dearest," he said slowly, but tenderly; "it is very sad. Poor Arnold: I expected no less from him."

"You expected this letter, papa? You knew that he would write it?"

"No, Leo; not that. But I knew that the difficulties to which Arnold alludes might arise. It seems that they have arisen."

"But what are these difficulties, papa?"

"My dear, Arnold does not detail them. It is not fitting, therefore, that I should do so even if I could—and I may say at once that I cannot. I have only a general acquaintance with the subject to which he refers."

"And you think that it must be as he says, that our engagement must end?"

"I fear it must be as he says."

"Oh, I could never bear it!" she cried, in a voice of anguish. Her father winced and his hands shook.

"Dearest," he said, "we have all troubles to bear, and we must bear them without repining. Strength will be given to you to endure, my Leo, it may be, even a more severe trouble than this.

Don't cry, my darling." She could not speak for some moments for her sobs.

"But to lose Arnold like this!—for I know not what reason! And to think that he may love another! Does he break our engagement because he loves another? Tell me—only—only don't say that you think he loves another."

He smiled, as he smoothed her soft hair from her forehead and kissed it.

"No, Leo; I don't think that Arnold has written this letter because he loves another. I think that is hardly possible. Ask yourself the question, dearest, when you look in the glass," he whispered, "and you may satisfy yourself on that subject. Besides, Arnold is a true and worthy gentleman. Surely you haven't forgotten that. He is not capable of a meanness, of a cowardice."

"Oh, thank you, papa."

"Whatever happens, dearest, think of him as an honourable gentleman. He may be suffering now as much as you are. Perhaps in releasing you from this engagement he was thinking less of himself than of you. It may be for your sake, Leo, for your surer happiness."

"But I don't want to be happy without Arnold.

I don't want to be released from my engagement," she said softly to him.

"We must let Arnold do his duty, Leo, and we must do ours; even though it should be the parting from Arnold for ever. Yes, Leo, for ever! It seems very terrible, poor child; but you would be brave when the time came and bear it bravely. Wouldn't you, my little Leo?"

She waited, lost in painful thought, weaving her fingers together round her father's hand.

"I think—" she said at last, in a subdued tone. "Yes," she went on. "Do you know, papa, I think I could bear a great deal if, if I was quite sure that Arnold really loved me!"

"My poor Leo!" said the old man tenderly; and he pressed her to his heart.

Just then a servant knocked at the study door He came to announce that a visitor had called at Croxall Chase—"The Marquis of Southernwood."

CHAPTER III.

THE RETREAT FROM OAKMERE.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Carr?"

"I am very pleased indeed to see your lordship," said the old gentleman cordially, yet with something of an old-fashioned formality in his welcome. "Mrs. Carr is still too unwell to see visitors. You will excuse her absence."

"I'm sure I'm very sorry."

"Poor thing, she is quite a martyr to rheumatism. My daughter will be here directly."

"I shall be delighted to see Miss Carr. Cold spring, isn't it? Thank you, Lady Southernwood is tolerably well; her health was never very good. I'm in hopes, as the warm weather comes on, we may be able to move her abroad. Poor Southernwood's death was a dreadful shock to her, and coming so close upon the loss of the little boy; and the weather is so much against invalids."

The conversation went on in thorough English fashion for some minutes. The weather subject discussed and exhausted, they proceeded to the contents of *The Times* newspaper.

"Yes," said the Marquis of Southernwood, "I was up in town for a few days. I only got back to the Abbey last night. Fellows were talking about it a good deal at the clubs. Quite a panic, they say, in the City. Some of the men deuced hard hit by the smash-up of that Silver Mining Company. I heard that Arnold Page was in it; a heavy sufferer, so some fellows said. I hope it mayn't be true. Such a good sort of a fellow as Arnold is; but they were telling all sorts of stories about him. How d'ye do, Miss Carr?"

Leo had entered while he was speaking. She looked pale, but composed, her eyes very bright. She must have heard some part of the little nobleman's observations, his praise of Arnold probably. It earned for him a charming smile and a gentle pressure of the hand.

"She's awfully pretty, that girl," he said to himself. Perhaps his admiration was in some measure to be read in his glance. Leo blushed a little as her eyes met his. His thoughts flew off from her to Arnold again. It was by a natural

process he turned from Leo to the man she was engaged to marry.

"I am sorry we don't see more of Arnold down here in Woodlandshire. Oakmere isn't at all a bad sort of place, nicely situated, very pretty country. A man might be very jolly there; especially such a jolly sort of fellow as Arnold."

It was apparent to his lordship immediately afterwards, by something he read in the faces of Mr. Carr and Leo, that his remarks were in some way unfortunate, or that their subject was ill-chosen. But he was at a loss to discover exactly what awkwardness disfigured his speech.

"I've been going somehow, too fast, I suppose; I must stop my horse: riding too close upon the hounds," he muttered. "I shall drive them to mischief if I don't take care." He wandered from the hunting to a racing metaphor. "Is Arnold scratched then for the great stakes? Can it possibly be that the favourite has bolted? And was that woman up at the Court, with all her rigmarole talk, really trying to give me the tip in a quiet sort of way? Certainly I was blazing dull about taking her meaning."

It was evident that Mr. Carr and his daughter had become embarrassed by the allusions to

Arnold: his lordship couldn't fail to appreciate the fact. When conversation is thus run into a knot, the way is not to stop to untie it, but to start fresh with another line. Just as in arranging one's cravat, if the bow can't be managed at once, it little avails to struggle with the mischance: one must take up a new piece of muslin. The Marquis was not easily disconcerted: he was not shy, and he possessed considerable volubility; a man with such advantage is not soon placed *hors de combat* in conversation. He soon changed the topic.

"I did not come out this morning intending to pay visits. It was quite a chance my calling. I'm very fortunate to find you at home. I came out to try a horse of Chalker's. Did you notice him, Miss Carr? I should like you to see him; Chalker wants me to buy him. You know Chalker? I think he's Lomax's second cousin, or something of that sort. Chalker rides heavy, you know, and says the horse isn't near up to his weight. He's very showy to look at, but I don't think he's good for much more than a park hack. I doubt his hunting, very much. I wouldn't trust him over timber; and I don't like his hind-leg action. One thing, this isn't much of a hunting county; at any rate, not in

this division. Poor Southernwood, you see, didn't care about it, and didn't encourage it much. Perhaps we may be able to manage a reform one of these days. But if the thing once goes down it's rather difficult to get it up again. Chalker isn't a bad sort of fellow: but he's rather a flat at a horse. Not that his pace is bad if you can get him to keep it up. He's a chestnut. I called at Oakmere and saw Mrs. Lomax. Not very well, she said. Lomax was away on business of some kind. She hadn't seen anything of Arnold lately."

It was unfortunate that his lordship should have taken the conversation as it were a canter in a circus, stopping again very much where he had started, on the subject of Arnold; and now the confusion of Leo had much increased, for she was asking herself the question, whether by any possibility Mrs. Lomax could have spoken to the Marquis on the subject of Arnold's letter—could have revealed the fact that the engagement was broken off. Her cheeks crimsoned at the thought. Mr. Carr adjusted the apex of his wig, and walked to the window to look at the chestnut, the property of the Honourable Dudley Chalker. A groom stood at the head of a tall, rather leggy, horse,

champing its bit proudly and leisurely, waiting for its rider outside the porch.

"I'm sorry you're so far off the Abbey," his lordship resumed, with a puzzled glance at Leo's blushes; "it's a good long ride over here. Lady Southernwood isn't able to see any one yet. I hope she may soon. It's very dull at the Abbey; but she likes me to be there. I run up to town for a day or two now and then, but I never stay long. Will you give my kind regards to Mrs. Carr? I hope she'll soon be better. Good-by. Just you look at the chestnut for a moment, Miss Carr. I shall ride over again soon, to see how Mrs. Carr is."

He took Mr. Chalker's steed a turn before the windows, caracoling a little to exhibit the chestnut's advantages, perhaps to display his own admirable horsemanship, though he looked very small mounted so high, waved his little closely gloved hand, removed his glossy hat from his sunny curls, and disappeared behind the clump of firs on the margin of the carriage drive, at a brisk trot.

"Yes," he said to himself, "there can be no doubt about it. That woman, Mrs. Lomax,—by George, what a jaw she has!—meant to put me

up to a wrinkle. The engagement must be off! Arnold must be out of the running! But *why*, I wonder? How's it come about? It can't be *his* fault? How can *he* have come to grief? He's never been extravagant: he's kept steadily out of a bad set of men; he never betted, or very seldom; because he never cared much about it: more for fun than anything else; he never played. I can't make it out. Oakmere was always said to be no end of a good property; that is, of course, in a moderate sort of way; and quite unencumbered when it came to him. What mess can he have got into? Women always liked him, they could hardly help it; but he wasn't much of a flirt, only in a joking way. He always held his own; knew what he was about. It can't be his doing. The little girl's an out-and-out good match for any man. He can hardly be such a fool as to have thrown her over! Has the old governor put a stopper on it? But I don't see the pull of his doing that. Old Page, I believe, was a great friend of his. It bothers me completely, I own. Would they let him go simply because he's dropped money in that Silver Mining Company? I must get at the truth of the matter. If need be, I'll see Arnold. There's no girl I like better than that little Carr. Lady

Southernwood's always at me to marry now I've come into the title. I wouldn't spoil old Arnold's game for the world: but if it's quite clear that he's out of the betting, I don't see why I shouldn't fairly go in and win. She's a dear little girl, and I can't help thinking sometimes that she rather likes me. Of course there'll be no end of chaff about the notion of my getting married. Even Chalker, who ain't very witty and that, he'd have something to say. But, lor', all that don't matter much when a fellow once makes up his mind. And I am pretty well used to chaff, I am; they're always at me, because I'm a little un, and good-natured, I suppose; and, after all, one has to come to marriage at some time or other."

So Lord Southernwood cogitated as he rode back the chestnut from Croxall Chase to Gashleigh Abbey. Apparently he had some considerable difficulty in deciding upon the merits of Chalker's horse. "It's clear he ain't a bad roadster," he was always saying; and yet he was constantly taking out the horse for renewed trials of his qualities in this respect, invariably selecting as the scenes of these judicial investigations the cross-country roads between the Abbey and the Chase. He was taken, besides, with an

extraordinary interest in the state of health of old Mrs. Carr. He seemed never satisfied that he received due information concerning her. Three times a week he would call at the Chase to prosecute his inquiries, and to express his sympathy for the old lady. On each occasion he would return more and more impressed with the conviction that Mr. Carr was an extremely pleasant, intelligent, kindly old gentleman, and that there was something wonderfully charming in the limpid brown eyes of Miss Carr. He had never seen in his life such stunning—such beautiful eyes, he meant to say. And what a soft little hand she had, and what a lovely red mouth—and wasn't her figure perfect, and her foot—and how well she put on her things—and what a jolly seat she had on that little white pony! And it was remarked at the Abbey that his lordship's appetite wasn't anything like what it had been. "A clipper—no end of a clipper—if I could only be sure that Arnold was really out of it, and that I could honestly go in on my own hook! I never loved any woman as I love her. By George! there's nothing I wouldn't do if she asked me. I thought I'd been hit before once or twice, but, lor', it was nothing to this. I'm in for it seriously this time—

no mistake at all about it. By George! it's time I found out about Arnold, though. I shouldn't like to do anything shabby—I never have yet, that I know of—only why isn't the old boy down here to look after himself, and hold his own? Certainly, I'll go up to town, and make sure, to-morrow, or the next day, or, at any rate, on Monday." Meanwhile, the chestnut was galloped again to Croxall, and further kind inquiries made respecting Mrs. Carr's rheumatism. Even the old lady, recumbent amongst her cushions, found some amusement in these repeated visits. "Bless the little man," she said; "he's very good to give himself so much trouble. One would think he was an apothecary, he comes so often." And she rang the bell. "I think I'll have an egg now beat up in a glass of sherry."

It is not to be supposed that the neighbourhood failed to notice Lord Southernwood's proceedings. As the chief magnate of the county it was natural that he should be the object of considerable attention. The intimacy with the Carr family was much canvassed and remarked upon. The visits of a marriageable bachelor at a house in which one of the tenants is a marriageable spinster involve one inevitable conclusion. People who are not clever at putting two and two together can gene-

rally manage to put one and one together, as it were, and to conclude that matrimony must necessarily represent the sum of the transaction. The gossips of the place stated at once that Mr. Carr's daughter would be the future Marchioness of Southernwood. If there had existed any other plan for the disposal of the lady's hand, such was now entirely at an end. Gossips have always short and convenient memories, and rumour is not particular as to the exact dovetailing of details. The *Woodlandshire Mercury and Stonyshire and North Wiltshire Flying Post* — a most admirable and largely circulated agricultural newspaper—had some months since informed its readers of an approaching marriage between Arnold Page, Esq., of Oakmere Court, Oakmere, son of the late General Page, C.B., &c., and the only daughter of J. J. Carr, Esq., of Croxall. Without contradicting or further referring to this statement, the editor now connected the lady's name with that of the Marquis of Southernwood. It would be difficult to say how this report crept into the printer's office and was put into type. The statement was certainly premature. At the time of its appearance in the columns of the *Mercury* there was little other foundation for it than the frequent visits of

Lord Southernwood at the Chase, his trials of the chestnut, his inquiries as to Mrs. Carr's health, and the country gossip these facts had originated. But there are some editors so anxious to put their readers in possession of early information that they will boldly guess at truth, and risk the course of events affirming or negativing their courage and cleverness. Just as there are some liars who set up for being truth-tellers, or even soothsayers, because the facts of to-day have not absolutely contradicted their fictions of yesterday.

Mrs. Lomax had received further intelligence concerning her absent lord—a few lines to say that he was still detained in town by his official duties. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, he said, had complied with a motion in the House for some important returns in connection with the Wafer Stamp Office, and the whole department were employed upon them day and night. He hoped shortly to return to Oakmere; in any case he would write a long letter in a day or two.

"Poor Frank! how he slaves for that horrid office!" Mrs. Lomax went about the house exclaiming. "He is sure to be seriously ill after all this—a reaction *must* come. No man can stand such constant wear and tear. I am sure he is growing

quite old and thin-looking of late, owing to his ceaseless exertions for the Government. They really ought to do something for him; or else I am sure I should advise his at once retiring from the service. He is not suited to an office of that kind. He is too anxious—too assiduous—too conscientious!"

Meanwhile, it was strange, certainly, that in reply to many inquiries made day after day at the Wafer Stamp Office, Whitehall, the only information to be obtained was to the effect that Mr. Lomax was in the country—absent from business—by reason of ill-health.

Some days later, the post brought Mrs. Lomax a letter. It was on foreign paper; it bore the post-mark of Paris; there was a flattered profile of Napoleon the Third upon the postage-stamp. The letter was from Mr. Lomax, dated from an hotel in the Rue de Richelieu.

"DEAREST GEORGINA,—*Burn this when you have read it,* but don't be alarmed. I have been compelled to come over here owing to many pressing claims that have recently come upon me. A most unfortunate combination of circumstances has placed me in a very painful position, out of which I don't see immediately the means of extricating

myself. In the first place, however, it was important to gain time. This could only be by my absenting myself from England. Things have happened very cross indeed; and a panic has almost hopelessly depressed the share market at the very moment when I was looking for a rise in prices to recover myself. *I fear Arnold will be a great loser.* I hope he will manage to avoid arrest. I endeavoured to give him warning; but I had enough to do to effect my own escape. Pray, dearest Georgina, do not let this distress you too much. Hope for the best. You must summon all your courage to meet this most unfortunate state of things. I cannot yet give you any information as to how long I shall remain here. But I will write again very shortly. And now as to the best course for you to take under the circumstances. It will be necessary for you to quit Oakmere at once. Without a doubt the furniture will be seized in the course of a day or two; indeed, I very much fear that Arnold's creditors will bring the whole place to the hammer. It will be a thousand pities that the Court should go out of the family. But what is to be done? There is such a terrible scramble always in cases of this kind; and creditors are always so cruelly rapacious. It is

heavily mortgaged, and if there is a forced sale I fear there will be a very poor margin after settling the claims of the mortgagees. One thing there is no fear about: the annuity payable to you, and charged upon the estate. It is most unlucky that Arnold should somehow have selected this precise moment for quarrelling with the Carrs. I have heard, too, that upon some squeamish pretext, he has been so weak as to release Leo from her engagement. How monstrous a piece of folly this seems to me, I need not inform you. Of course old Carr will do all he can now to widen the breach —if not to break off the marriage altogether. If Arnold had but secured Leo's fortune, he still might defy the storm. But bad luck always seems to set in for such a long run. As I have said, Arnold will be a heavy loser; but I think we may manage yet to keep out of the Bankruptcy Court, especially if he has taken my warning, and absented himself in time. Creditors are much more inclined to compromise when their debtor keeps them at arm's length. If he once lets them close in upon him, it's all up with him. Pray keep up your spirits, Georgy dearest, and for all our sakes try to put as good a face upon this matter as you can. Leave Oakmere as quietly as pos-

sible. I parted with the house and furniture in Great Upper Eaton Place some time since, at a time when I was much pinched for money, though I think I have not mentioned the circumstance before. I should recommend, therefore, your looking for a nice furnished house somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Regent's Park. You need not stint yourself in regard to rent. Suspicion —which it is our interest to allay as much as possible—might be aroused by your taking too small or too cheap a house. There will be no rent to be paid for some months; it will be quite time enough to trouble ourselves as to the amount due when the time for payment arrives. Give out that Oakmere does not agree with you, or that you desire to be nearer London in order to obtain masters for the children. Of course take Miss Gill to town with you, and don't dismiss the servants at the Court: they are Arnold's servants, not ours, remember. In fact, do all you can to cover our retreat. Should you find yourself pushed for means, I fear I must ask you to convert your jewels into money: but do this as quietly as you can. I would send you a cheque, but that I drew out the balance of my account, overdrawing, in fact, as much as I dared, to supply myself here;

but you will find some loose gold, I think, in the drawer of the escritoire in my study. Break it open, if you can't find the key. You will remove all portable valuables from the Court—*especially the plate;* it will be judicious to retain possession of these as long as possible, and they may be overlooked by the creditors. It will be as well to settle any small bills that may be due from us in the village; it will not cost much, and it will have a good effect. You might almost ride up to town; by which means you will secure carriage and horses for London; they can be sold at any time if found troublesome; and the luggage could follow you by train. Remember! *Everything left in the Court will be utterly lost to us*—because I make no doubt that the creditors will seize everything in a very short time; but there is no organization amongst them, and a great deal may be done if one has the start of them in matters of this kind. Write to me what you propose doing. You had better for the present address all letters to the post-office here. Excuse the haste and, I fear, incoherence, of this letter. I am writing as fast as I can to save the post; and I jot down remarks and suggestions, without much order, just as they come into my head. You will bear in mind that

the odium of the seizure and sale of Oakmere must fall on Arnold; by no possibility can we avert this. A little more or less of scandal carried to his account cannot much signify, therefore. There will be no harm, consequently, in permitting people to think that though *we* are to some extent sufferers, *the ruin* is Arnold's—that we quit Oakmere because of his misfortunes. You can even speak of his unhappy speculations having been made in direct opposition to my counsel—to his neglect of the advice of those so much more likely to be informed on a subject of so vital an importance, and so on. If this sort of notion but be spread about—which will really hurt Arnold in no way—it will materially strengthen our position. I will write again very shortly. I am quite confident that you will do everything for the best. I trust your head has not been troubling you. Make a few visits in the neighbourhood before quitting the Court, and explain your departure in the way you think most desirable. And with love and kisses to the children,

"Believe me, dearest Georgina,

"Ever your affectionate husband,

"FRANCIS L. CHALKER LOMAX."

"P.S.—*Be very careful to destroy this letter!*"

Mrs. Lomax had some right to be startled by this strange and unexpected communication. If she commenced her perusal reclining on the sofa, she concluded the letter in a much more energetic position. She had started to her feet. She was clutching the mantel-piece: the paper fell on the ground, as she raised her hand to press her forehead, throbbing now with something beyond accustomed aches. Next she read through the letter again: her intelligence seemed at first paralyzed by her surprise, and she seemed unable to grasp at the meaning of her husband's words. What did she know of, how could she be expected to understand, pecuniary embarrassment — she who, as General Page's daughter, Arnold's sister, Francis Lomax's wife, had never had a wish ungratified, if money was in any way depended upon in the matter? Her husband fled to avoid his creditors, Arnold irretrievably ruined, Oakmere Court to be abandoned—sold to the highest bidder—perforce, the old house and estate gone from the family for ever! It was hardly credible. And the frightful suddenness of all this. She might well be shocked.

She had not possessed the slightest conception or suspicion of the mischief that had been impending; and this notwithstanding the very cordial

understanding and confidence that had appeared to exist between her husband and herself. She knew that he was a proprietor of shares in various undertakings—speculated, indeed—without having any very clear notion that speculation implied almost equal probabilities as to loss and gain. Life had always, to her mind, represented affluence—a well furnished table, good society, horses and carriages, a perpetual balance at the bankers'. She could not understand a sudden taking away of all these things any more than the abrupt lopping off of her limbs. She had, of course, heard and read often enough of loss, and bankruptcy, misfortune, creditors, ruin—but without once dreaming that such influences could ever draw near to her detriment, could ever affect her in any way. She deemed them as visitations which might afflict other people; but she thought herself in some way secured and fortified against any such ill chance. She had brought herself, by some process of thought, to an active belief that she had been, as it were, vaccinated by Fate, and rendered proof against the attacks of misfortune, as she had been, when a child, secured against the evils of small-pox.

Arnold ruined! The thought could not but be

very painful to her. She had a considerable affection for her brother, though she had been a good deal in the habit of plastering over her feelings with sham sentiment, very dangerous to their vitality; just as other ladies are prone to spoil the beauty of their complexions by injurious coatings of rouge and pearl-powder. But, in truth, after all her frothy talk and artificial decorations of the subject had been cleared away, there certainly remained a genuine foundation of regard for Arnold. It was very sad. Ruined! and, in some way, she knew not how precisely, ruined by her husband. She could not but see *that*, though Mr. Lomax had forborne to make any clear confession on the subject; and had she done nothing to further the completion of the catastrophe? The marriage which—her husband admitted as much—might have saved Arnold, had she not done all in her power to postpone and prevent? Had she not sought to mine Leo's love for and confidence in Arnold? Had she not endeavoured to effect a breach in their engagement, and to widen the division between them by every artifice her ingenuity could suggest, even to the calling in the aid of Leo's jealousy, to ensure the success of the scheme? Had she not hastened to

inform little Lord Southernwood—not directly, but at least by suggestions—that the engagement was at an end? only that his lordship had seemed obtuse on the subject, influenced perhaps by his own attachment to Leo, his regard for his friend Arnold, or his want of confidence in himself and his own merits. Yes, unwittingly perhaps, but no less certainly, she had hurried Arnold's downfall.

As to her husband's position, there seemed to be less precise information. But it was clear, according to his own statement, that he had left the country to avoid arrest, and it was not possible to say how long his expatriation might endure. However, there was work to be done, and she must nerve herself to do it.

Beneath Mrs. Lomax's affectation of languor and ill-health there was much greater strength of character, much more cleverness than, perhaps, many people would have been disposed to admit. Perhaps she was in something of the same case as the old Roman conspirator, who came on the stage in his nightcap, and said, "I'm not sick, if there's anything going on worth being well for." Perhaps she drew strength from the occasion: clearly it was no time for one of her headaches now. She bathed her temples, dined with Miss Gill

and the children, the while calm, placid, cheerful, but with dignity; ordered the barouche, fortified herself with one or two extra glasses of sherry, and went forth to pay a round of visits.

The courage which women so constantly exhibit in periods of peril, even in cases where men are sometimes terribly cowed and cast down, presents a circumstance worthy of more consideration and comment than I can here afford to give to it. Is it that, possessing less imagination than man, as well as less reason and foresight (I am not flattering the sex now, am I?), they are the less likely to magnify their danger, less likely to appraise it with any exactness? or are they moved by a greater faith, amounting to a strange sort of confidence, that what they desire will somehow be brought to pass? But I must leave the reader to ponder this little matter at his leisure.

More or less conscious of the disasters that had fallen upon her family, Mrs. Lomax paid visits to her friends in the neighbourhood, including Mr. and Miss Carr, Mrs. Carr being still unable to receive visitors.

Mrs. Lomax took occasion to mention, in the course of her conversation, that she was about to

quit Oakmere Court; for one reason, that her brother had views in regard to it which, while she regretted, she was powerless to avert. She fancied that he might even part with possession of the property altogether. But she was without certain information on the subject. Such a proceeding would be, of course, opposed to the wishes of Mr. Lomax and herself. But, indeed, she was not sorry, for many reasons, to quit the country for a time. She rather looked forward to a season in London. They thought of taking a furnished house in town for some months: their own house, in Eaton Place, was unfortunately let: they couldn't very well turn out an excellent tenant, or make him suffer for their change of plan. No; she should not see much of the gay world. She was not particular as to the situation of the house, so that there was plenty of room in it—with children plenty of room was so desirable. She was the more anxious to be in town, because she couldn't bear to be alone in the country, and Mr. Lomax would be absent from her for some little time, she feared. He had been very busy of late, terribly overworked, he really was too conscientious—tried to do too much. But the financial department of the Government had been very

much occupied of late. She believed some important changes were in contemplation, but she really did not understand the matter much, though Mr. Lomax had kindly tried to explain the matter to her. She had always been but a poor creature at figures. Mr. Lomax was at present abroad. It was in connection with his official duties—he was entrusted, she believed, with the settlement of some kind of Continental commercial treaty, but she knew nothing of the particulars; it was a position of great responsibility; the time he would be absent was very uncertain, it depended upon so many things. In London she should be so much nearer to her own doctor; it would be so great a comfort to her, for her health had been anything but good of late, her headaches were dreadfully frequent in their recurrence, and had of late increased in violence. There were drawbacks, too, as to the education of children in the country. Miss Gill was giving her every satisfaction; her attention was unremitting; she was really quite a treasure; but Edith and Rosa were of an age now when the assistance of masters was imperatively required, and Oakmere was so inconveniently situated for anything of that kind—and so on. She entertained her acquaintances

with a very plausible narrative, and everybody appeared to be perfectly convinced that, under the circumstances, the departure of the Lomaxes from Oakmere was, although much to be lamented, still unavoidable. Even old Mr. Carr seemed to be quite satisfied on this head; at least no one noticed that there was a certain strangeness in the smile he wore as he listened to Mrs. Lomax, bowing his head, shaking hands with her, and afterwards conducting her to her carriage with so much old-fashioned courtesy. Leo had kept watchful eyes on the visitor, but had taken but little part in the conversation; but she greeted very warmly, kissing them profusely, Edith and Rosy, who had seats in the barouche, and had learned with great glee that they were very soon to quit Oakmere for London. "And we shall go shopping, and have new dresses," said Edith. "Yes," cried Rosy, "and see 'Punch and Judy' in the street, and go to the Z'logical Gardens; and, perhaps, papa or uncle Ar will take us to the play. Won't it be fun?"

Certainly Mrs. Lomax showed herself equal to the occasion. She managed the retreat from Oakmere very cleverly, exhibiting very adroit generalship; carrying off her baggage and muni-

tions of war so completely, that not so much as a silver spoon fell into the hands of the enemy. And there seemed to be no suspicion touching the motive of her flight. If Mr. Carr was better informed on the subject than other people, he held his peace (the old gentleman had almost a genius for reticence and reserve), and the family credit was not impeachable in the neighbourhood. The petty claims in the village were duly satisfied; there could be no further trouble on their account. Mr. Lomax was not without the wisdom of this world. He knew that the small creditors are always the more troublesome; that people are given to put down their sovereigns carelessly, while they struggle with earnest effort for the possession of halfpence; that it is difficult to believe in great losses, but every one is anxious to guard against little misfortunes; and that when to a man with large debts and little money, occurs the question, "Whom to pay?"—unless he is inclined to defy society altogether by crying, "No one!"—he will answer wisely, "I will pay those small near creditors, in contact with me, invested, therefore, with greater powers of annoyance—those of my own household, my servants, tradespeople, the water-rates—it's dread-

ful to have no water in the cistern! I will provide for the fleabites, which are immediate, inevitable. I will run the risk of being devoured alive, which is remote and perhaps, after all, problematical."

Notwithstanding, therefore, the suddenness of their movements, the Lomax family quitted Oakmere, as it were, under a triumphal arch, with *éclat*, without suspicion; and the shutters were closed in many of the windows of the house, which put on, as though in mourning for the departed, a desolate, forlorn, uninhabited look.

"Can any one be dead, I wonder?"

The gentleman who muttered this inquiry had come down from London by the train. He contemplated the altered aspect of the house with some apprehension.

"If she should have escaped me again!" It was Monsieur Anatole who spoke.

He rang a bell at a side door of the house; some time elapsed before his summons received any attention.

"The family have left for town." Such was the information he finally obtained.

Monsieur Anatole was evidently enraged; he

trembled, as though palsied; he swore many oaths in a foreign tone, and shook a sallow knuckly fist menacingly in the air. Finally, he ground his heel into the gravel-walk before the house, and, turning his back upon Oakmere, resumed the road back to the nearest railway station.

"*O petite!*" he mumbled angrily, "if my love goes to turn to hate!"

Lord Southernwood made very praiseworthy efforts to learn something of Arnold Page and his movements, even at last to going up to town to prosecute inquiries concerning him. But "fellows at the club" could give no information. Page hadn't "turned up at the Junior Adonis for ever so long." There was an idea prevalent that he had left England, "doosid hard hit and that," by the smash-up of the Dom Ferdinando El Rey Silver Mining Company; but it was thought that he would show up again in time, when the thing had blown over a bit. And "fellows at the club" asked Lord Southernwood, in his turn—"Was it true that Arnold's affair with that little Carr was all off? And, supposing that to be the case, what an awful sell it was of Arnold, wasn't it though? And what a pity he hadn't married her at the end of

last season; he might have made it all right with her money. And what a nice little girl she was—fellows all liked her; little, you know, but no end of pretty." Lord Southernwood could arrive at no positive information concerning his friend.

He even ventured into the Temple, and found his way to Sun-Dial Buildings, after some little difficulty and considerable discussion with a beadle in an orange cape, and a knot of porters in very short aprons, and with pewter badges almost as big as cheese-plates in front of them. (Why do Inns of Court porters always wear short aprons and pewter badges?) He had visited Arnold once or twice in the Temple in the old prosperous days, but the organ of locality was not highly developed in his lordship's phrenological economy, and he had always had great difficulty in discovering Sun-Dial Buildings. Perhaps the Temple is rather intricate and bewildering to strangers.

But Arnold's chambers reached, there was little gained. The black outer door was closed. He had the pleasure of reading his friend's name in white paint outside, and of slipping his card through the letter-slip, hearing the feeble sound of its fall into the letter-box within, and that was all. The gentleman was away, the porters thought—had not

been seen in the Temple for some days past. Mr. Hooper, the gentleman as lived with him, it was surmised, was often at the chambers, though probably not there at present. Lord Southernwood returned to the West End, rather disconsolate. He took counsel with some of "the fellows at the club." It was suggested that Arnold might be keeping out of the way for reasons which all appreciated: "But, you know, they can't take a fellow on Sunday, can they?" said some one. "Write and ask him to dine with you on Sunday."

Lord Southernwood was grateful for the suggestion. He wrote a line to the Temple, begging Arnold to dine with him in the Albany on the following Sunday—for one reason, that he had something particular to say to him.

"If he's in town," said his lordship, "no doubt Hooper's in the secret, and takes care of his letters. I remember Hooper, now I come to think of it. Good-natured little hump-backed man: never could make out why Arnold cared about him. I'll send the letter to the Temple."

In the course of a few posts Lord Southernwood received a reply from Arnold, rather abruptly worded, as he thought. His invitation was declined,

without any assigned reason; but if his lordship particularly desired to see Arnold Page, he was requested to call on a specified evening, at a given address in Coppice Row.

"He seems rather savage, poor old boy," remarked Lord Southernwood; "down on his luck, I suppose. Well, a man does get a little put out when he's up a tree. I know what it is myself. I must try and cheer him up. But where the doose is Coppice Row? Never heard of such a place; give you my honour—never. But suppose a hansom will be able to find it. Does any fellow know where Coppice Row is?"

And there were various guesses:—Bloomsbury, Paddington, Bermondsey, Peckham, &c. Some "fellows," indeed, were quite anxious to back their opinions heavily.

Mr. Robin Hooper still resided at the chambers in Sun-Dial-Buildings, and took care of Arnold's letters, conveying them to him stealthily. But Mr. Hooper was a good deal absent during the day. He could settle to nothing, as he said—could not read, could not write—for thinking of Arnold. He was paler, more delicate-looking than ever. He was constantly at Mrs. Simmons's house, or visiting Jack Lackington's studio, or at

the Café de l'Univers, marvelling at Tithonus, still an *habitué* of the place. At night he sat alone in the rooms in Sun-Dial Buildings: amidst all the luxurious comfort of their fitting up they seemed, in Arnold's absence, very cheerless and wretched.

"I shall be almost glad to leave them now," he said; "though I've been very happy here, too. But Arnold says he must give them up; that he can never afford to keep them after what's happened. Poor Arnold! it sounds very strange, his talking in that way. I grow very nervous about him. I almost wish that he were safe out of England. I feel sure that they are trying to arrest him. It's a bad, dreadful business; it's killing him. I never saw a man so changed. Certainly it is hard for him to bear—to lose his fortune, and to lose *her*. Yes, and he loves her very dearly; more than I ever thought he could love. I haven't done him justice in that respect; but he didn't do himself justice, either. He was so fond of looking at everything from such a gay, pleasant, light-hearted point of view, one got to think him incapable of deeper feelings. He seemed to think that everything in life was but a jest. I know now he thought very differently all the while; but it's a

sort of fashion for men to affect not to be in earnest. Poor Arnold! And how can she bear to give him up at a word, in a moment? But do people ever love as they are loved?"

Slowly he unlocked a drawer, taking from it a carefully folded sheet of paper. He opened it: it contained a slight pencil sketch—he must have begged or borrowed, perhaps stolen it from Jack Lackington—certainly it had been cut out of his sketch-book. It was the drawing of Janet Gill he had exhibited one night at the Café de l'Univers.

"Yes," said Robin Hooper, contemplating the drawing very sadly, "it is very hard to love without hope."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MARQUIS OF SOUTHERNWOOD.

Mr. Phil Gossett remained faithful to Mrs. Simmons in her affliction. He still lodged on the first floor of her house in Coppice Row.

"I can do just what I like, that's the great advantage of it," as he would often confess. "It's not a quiet house, and the situation can't be called first-rate. But then I like noise too much myself to complain of it in others; and I haven't far to go to St. Lazarus's; and that's a great comfort, when you come to think of early lectures in the winter. And I can study all night, if I think proper,—I don't often go out,—or smoke all night, or play the piano all night. There's nobody to find fault; nobody who can't sleep through it. Isn't that jolly to think of? And the children cry and laugh, and the widow rehearses melodrama in the back parlour, and I play up here my loudest on the piccolo, or practise my deepest

and severest bass songs—you can't think how stunning it is altogether. It will be a great treat to you, Arnold."

Arnold smiled. Mr. Gossett's good-humour was irresistible: and it was hard to say that he did not believe every word of his praises of the Coppice Row establishment, in which he pursued his studies of music from choice, and medicine from necessity.

"I've got several songs you haven't heard," he continued. "But you won't be charged anything extra on that account. Hullo! here's your visitor. Now don't hurry the *tempo!* Your pulse, I see, is moving from *allegro* to *allegretto.* No slurring of the difficult passages. And if in the middle of the discussion you feel inclined for a song—music, you know, hath charms, &c.—shout out for me, and I'll come in and sing the 'Piff-paff,' or something equally soft and soothing. I'll just fill my pipe before I go."

Mr. Gossett was speaking very much at random concerning the visit Arnold was about to receive. He was unacquainted with the exact relation in which Arnold stood to the Marquis of Southernwood, but he could perceive that his friend was under some excitement in expectation of the interview.

Lord Southernwood, in the charge of a Hansom cabman, had been conveyed to Coppice Row. He surveyed through his eye-glass a neighbourhood entirely new to him. Occasionally he lost that command he was accustomed to maintain over his astonishment, and was unable to resist the utterance of an explosive "By Jove!"

He leaped lightly from his cab at the private door of the widow Simmons's house, and considerably over-paid the cabman, under the impression, probably, that he must have come a long journey of many miles from the West End of London.

"First floor, if you please, sir," said Mrs. Simmons, in reply to his inquiry for Arnold Page, and after a scrutinizing glance at the visitor.

She was quite aware that her lodger did not desire to be "at home" to every one; not at all astonished at his wishes in that respect. Perhaps former lodgers had entertained similar views as to the importance of retirement from the world.

"What a dear little man!" she exclaimed, as his lordship ascended the dark, tortuous stairs; "fresh as a daisy, and light as a feather. And what a little foot; I don't believe I could get into his boots. Why, he don't look a bit bigger than that little Miss Bilberry at Bristol,

when she played Captain Charlotte on her benefit. What a mite she was! Though, certainly, she'd a very neat leg. One thing, I've been so accustomed to see such tall men. Ah! my poor Jemmy! He *was* a fine man once! and a love of a figure, too! A sweet harlequin, though he wasn't a good husband; and took too much, I must say, though he's the father of my children. But I shall never look upon his like again—never! Nancy, you good-for-nothing girl! what do 'you put the kettle on for, without any water in it? Do you want to burn the bottom out?" &c.

If Arnold had been disposed to any severity of feeling in regard to his old and intimate friend, Lord Dolly, he would certainly have found it difficult to restrict himself to such a state of mind in the presence of his lordship. The frank cordiality, the warmth of attachment, the cheery good-nature, manifest in his visitor's looks and manner, would have been sufficient to disarm a man far more inclined to acrimony and rigour of judgment than was Arnold Page. Certainly it is difficult to think unkindly of a friend in his presence; and there are so many men whose charms of manner prevail against all considerations

of more important gracelessness. Contemplating little Lord Southernwood, with his "Cupid" airs, his hearty laugh, his silky curls, his pink and white complexion, his eye-glass, his unconsciously frank and open method of speech; his utter unreserve upon all and every topic; it was as hard to condemn him upon any question, as it would be to treat harshly a child, or a school-boy, or a pretty woman.

"How are you, Arnold, old boy? Deuced glad to see you. Awful time since we've met. Hardly expected to find you in this odd corner. You've not a very brilliant look-out: though it might be worse, mightn't it? The prison's gloomy —House of Correction, is it? But then that public over there looks no end of cheerful. One would think they sold gas, they put such a lot in the window. Well, and how have you been getting on? And what have you been doing with yourself? You don't look particularly well; pale and thin, I think. However, that don't matter much, does it? Part of a fellow's training. I'm sure I'm very glad to see you!"

"Your lordship's very kind to say so," Arnold began, in rather dry tones.

But how could he talk sternly to the little man

who was shaking him by the hand with such unaffected fervour.

"You must keep your pecker up, you know, Arnold. You've been unlucky, haven't you? At least, I hear fellows saying so. Some infernal public company; always the way, somehow. When they get a gentleman in the City, they generally manage to fleece him. But, you know, things never turn out so bad as they look. You'll pull through; fellows always do pull through. I've known so many cases of this kind. You're quite right to keep quiet, though. Go abroad; the thing will blow over—things always do blow over, somehow."

"Yes; I'm thinking of going abroad almost immediately, but——"

"I'd stick to Paris, I think. I wouldn't try Hombourg, or any of those places. They're too tempting, too risky; and the run of luck is evidently against you just now. Keep in Paris. You'll find the society very pleasant; mixed, but amusing. Keep there till things can be got square over here."

"If they succeed in making me bankrupt—I learn that that is contemplated—I must, of course, surrender. In any case, I give up everything—

everything! It's as well to speak quite plainly on the subject. It's as well that there should be no misunderstanding. My lord, our positions are greatly changed since we first met, some years ago, now. Henceforth we are little likely to be thrown together; but you may know at once that I am ruined—completely ruined."

"Oh, no; not so bad as that comes to, old fellow. Something must be done for you. Keep abroad. We can at least attach you to an embassy somewhere, or something of that sort. Fellows live very comfortably at the embassy. Or why not a consulship? That kind of thing somewhere —just for a time: till things are put right here—which, of course, they will be, only we must give them time. By George! I'll force the Government to give you something. They're in a doose of a hurry for my vote; but I'd go into opposition if they won't do anything for such an old friend as you are, Arnold."

"Your lordship is very kind; but I could not, for many reasons, accept such a thing—least of all could I permit your intervention on my behalf in such a matter."

"How do you mean, old fellow, I don't quite see?"

"I don't wish to say anything wanting in courtesy or in temper; we've been on such good terms in the past, that it's not worth while that—indeed there is no reason why—we should quarrel now."

"Quarrel, old man? Oh, dear, no, of course not," said his lordship—a little confused, it may be, and troubled with some forebodings that their conversation promised to contain certain elements of danger.

"But I think I am right in saying that your visit here—made at your own desire, not mine—was for some other object than to tender your services to me; though, indeed, I should wish you to understand that I am anything but ungrateful for these."

Lord Southernwood coloured a little, and looked on the ground.

"You see, Arnold," he said, hesitatingly, and then stopped, hardly knowing how to proceed, or what he had purposed to say.

"You come here, not to pry into my hiding-place, to look with your own eyes upon my fallen state, to satisfy yourself as to my poverty and disgrace—not to do these, I know. I neither wish to be insulting, nor unjust; nor was it simply to

proffer me aid that you came here. Pray let us go at once to a subject we must arrive at sooner or later. I have seen *this.*"

He produced and presented to the Marquis the copy of the *Woodlandshire Mercury*, which contained the paragraph before referred to, setting out that a certain marriage was on the *tapis*, &c.

"I didn't know of this. I give you my honour I didn't know of this," cried Lord Southernwood, considerably excited. "I never saw this before. It wasn't in *The Times*—it wasn't in *Bell's Life*—and—and I never see any of the other papers."

"But is it true?" Arnold asked sternly.

"No, it's not true; they ought not to put such things in the paper. By George, it ought not to be allowed. How do they get hold of such things? who the deuce writes them? It's too bad. 'Pon my soul, it's too bad. I give you my honour I didn't know that such a thing had appeared in print."

"But is there no ground for this statement?" His lordship paused for a little, in evident embarrassment; his glass fell from his eye.

"Look here, Arnold, old man. Don't be too hard upon a fellow: don't be in too great a hurry to think badly of me. You've, perhaps, a right to turn round a little upon fellows just now; but don't

try to get me in a corner. I'm not a cur; I never did anything yet very shabby to anybody, not that I know of, and I ain't going to begin now. I'm quite willing to speak out plain and that, if you'll only let me, and listen to me. I've admired *her* all along—I have, upon my honour; but I never dreamt of more than that, till the story went about that you were out of the thing, altogether out of it, don't you know?"

"Well, my lord?"

"Give me time, old man; and if you call me Dolly once more, it would really be rather a treat and a comfort, and that sort of thing. Well, since I've heard that story, I own things have seemed rather different, and I've been down in the neighbourhood, don't you know? and I've seen more and more of her; and I couldn't help it, but I got to think more and more of her every day, and perhaps overdid it and went over there too often. But I was out trying a horse of Chalker's, and somehow the brute would always gallop that way, and it was awful dull at the Abbey; and, perhaps, I called there more than I ought, and I'm sure I'm very sorry if I've done wrong." He waited a moment, perhaps to see if Arnold would speak, but he remained silent, biting his lips, his eyes

bent on the carpet. His lordship contemplated his companion through his eye-glass, which he had resumed, as he continued—

"And now, Arnold, if you'll only tell me that that story is all wrong, that the engagement is not at an end, though it may be standing over for a time; if you'll only tell me this, I'm sure I'll do all I can to make amends; I'll never go near the place again, never speak of her, try not to think of her. I'll go out of the country if you like, to Italy, or anywhere—it don't matter to me, you know; or I'll go down and punch that editor's head; I'll do anything you like to mention to put things square again. Duelling and that's rather out of fashion, you know, or if it had been any comfort to you to have had a shot at me, I'm sure I should have been very happy to have stood up to you. A fellow ought to do all he can to make amends for a shabby thing; only for what that newspaper fellow writes, why, it is not true—there hasn't been a word said of anything of the kind."

"And she encouraged your visits?" Arnold asked, gloomily. It was curious how they both avoided all mention of the name of the person in reference to whom the discussion arose.

"She is the same as ever," Lord Southernwood

said, with some enthusiasm in his manner; "only, perhaps, a little quieter and sadder in her ways. We were always friendly and that, and I could always find something to say to her, when I wouldn't open my mouth before some other women. She was always kind and jolly, you know, and laughed when a fellow tried to say anything amusing, and helped him out when he got into a hole in his conversation. I think she liked me a little always, and things are pretty much about the same as ever they were—only—only I think I care more for her than I ever used to, more than I ever cared for any woman in the world."

Arnold raised his eyes for a moment to regard his friend, then lowered them, as he said, in a low voice—

"My engagement is at an end—for ever. We are not likely to meet any more; we can never be anything more to each other. In the future it can matter little to me whom she loves, whom she marries."

There was silence for some minutes. Lord Dolly was the first to speak.

"I suppose, though, old fellow," he said slowly, "you'd find it doosid hard not to hate the man who becomes her husband."

Arnold frowned; but presently a cloud seemed to clear from his face.

"I love her, though—though I may never look upon her face again,"—his voice trembled very much as he spoke—"I hope she may be happy, very happy, in her future husband; and no, I will not hate him, not if he wins her love, not if he loves her—a true loyal gentleman who will prize, at its proper value, the treasure trusted to his keeping; who will devote to her his life; who will be good and generous, and loving and tender to her always, whatever happens. No! I couldn't hate such a man."

Lord Southernwood looked at his friend very disconsolately.

"He can't mean me," he said to himself; "Arnold always *was* rather beyond me." And he leant his head upon his hands, resting his arms upon his knees, a picture of gloom, dejection, intense melancholy. Arnold moved towards him.

"Give me your hand, Dolly," he said, in a kindly, though rather tremulous voice; "it was of you I was thinking. Win her love if you can. I think I could trust her happiness to your keeping."

"By George!" cried his lordship, much moved, "do you really think so, Arnold?"

"You love her, Dolly?"

"I do, upon my soul; and I'll try and deserve her, and be worthy of her, and all that. I'm a better sort of fellow of late, you know, than I used to be. All strictly proper since I got the peerage; the Upper House, you know; that sort of thing. I've been very steady of late, living at the Abbey with the Marchioness, who's been urging me to marry, and who'll be delighted to hear of this, who's a very good, kind woman, though melancholy—but that's only to be expected—and very religious and that, and who'd be very glad to see her at the Abbey, and who'd be sure to make much of her and love her no end, as indeed who could help doing? And, indeed, I'll do all that man can do to make her happy. I will, indeed. I know I don't deserve such good fortune; but I've reformed. I'm better behaved, ever so, than I used to be. And that case at Brompton—you know what I mean—has been given up now, quite; for good and all. I did the right thing, and got out of it, and I'm deuced glad. And I'll go on straight and proper now; you see if I don't. What a trump you are, Arnold! You know I've been deuced miserable about this. I was so afraid that you'd cut up

rough; and it did so look as though I'd been playing a shabby trick, hitting a man when he was down, you know. But you'll promise me you'll think as kindly of me as you can? Will you, now? and there can be no reason why we shouldn't be friends still, as we have been all through."

Arnold shook his head gloomily.

"Ah, but by-and-by," his lordship continued, "you'll think better of things; and you'll find that you'll pull through your difficulties; and we shall see you prosperous and happy yet."

"No," said Arnold, with some bitterness; perhaps the very manifest happiness of his visitor jarred upon him and wounded him; "don't trouble yourself to dream such dreams concerning me and my future. I'm utterly ruined and broken down, beyond all getting up again. Indeed, I don't know what will become of me. What is a man of my age to do when ruin like this comes upon him? I'm too old even to enlist:" and he smiled with a strange sadness.

"Poor old boy!" murmured his lordship, and he began to appreciate the fact that his presence, under existing circumstances, was perhaps likely to be a source of some pain to his friend. "He's

sadly down upon his luck just now. I can do him no good. I'd better go." And then he added aloud, "You'll let me see you again before you quit England, Arnold? please do."

"Why not?—if you wish it. Though what good can come of our meeting? But my stay is very uncertain. I may start immediately, or I may be prevented leaving at all for a very long time. It matters very little either way."

"But we don't part in anger?" his lordship asked, appealingly.

"Certainly not, Dolly. Good-by!"

"And—may I tell her that I have seen you? May I repeat what you have said on *that* subject?"

"Anything you will, Dolly."

Lord Southernwood breathed freely.

"You're a great trump, Arnold. Good-by. God bless you, old fellow. I hope things will soon come square again. I'm sure they will." And he hurried out to look for a cab, to be carried back again to the West End of London.

"Something must be done for Arnold," he kept on saying to himself; "of course something must be done. The Government must be bullied if need be. I'll play up all sorts of games in the House if

something isn't done. I'll astonish the weak nerves of the peers. I'm quite capable of doing it."

He lit a cigar. Under the soothing influence of his smoke his thoughts drifted away from Arnold and his misfortunes to more pleasant topics.

"That darling little child! that sweet little Leo!" he said to himself. "How I do love her! How happy I shall be if I can ever call her mine! And there ought to be no doubt about it now. I ought to be the favourite now at long odds. With Arnold scratched, I ought to win in a canter. If I can only persuade her to love me ever so little! and she *does* like me. Only there seems a long step from laughing with a fellow, and chaffing and gossiping, and that, to downright loving him—decidedly a long step."

"What does it matter now?" Arnold asked himself very sadly. And he sank into a chair, leaning forward, staring at the carpet, biting his lips, his nails. Then he hid his face in his trembling hands, rocking himself to and fro in great grief. For some time he was left alone, a prey to bitter reflections.

"May I come in?" asked some one at the door,

who entered as he put the question. It was Phil Gossett.

"Has the visitor gone? I just wanted to fill my pipe again; and I think I left my tobacco-pouch on the mantel-shelf. I've been nursing the baby in the parlour behind the shop, and telling the children stories till I've drained my memory and my imagination quite dry. Hollo! Arnold, don't look so sad, or you'll make me miserable too. Here, let me play you something on the piccolo to cheer you up. What shall it be; 'Ruddier than the Cherry?' or would you like something dismal, 'The Wanderer,' say; or the 'Maniac,' with prodigious theatrical effects."

"Thank you, Phil," said Arnold, grimly. "Something gay and light-hearted, to suit the occasion. Play 'The Wedding March;' and sing anything you like—'Three Jolly Postboys,' or, 'He's a Jolly Good Fellow;' anything with mirth and jollity about it."

Mr. Gossett looked at his friend with rather a puzzled air.

"Don't play anything of the sort, Phil," said a third person. Robin Hooper entered the room. "Arnold doesn't mean it, I know, by the sound of his voice."

And he went and took Arnold's hand, pressing it kindly. He gazed in his face; he read its worn, suffering look, so strengthened and intensified during the last half-hour.

"Dear Arnold," he began. Then it occurred to him that, perhaps, silent was better suited to the case than spoken sympathy.

"Poor old Rob," Arnold said in a moved voice, returning the pressure of his hand. Then, after a pause, he went on, hoarsely, "I must end this, Rob. I must get away from here as soon as may be, or I shall go mad. Let me go at once!"

"Well, perhaps it will be better so," Rob whispered, slowly and thoughtfully; "there are men constantly watching the Temple. I am afraid of being followed. I think it may be as well to make a move."

A plan was soon agreed upon.

Some few hours later Robin took an affectionate leave of Arnold at St. Katherine's wharf, on board the *Baron Osy* steamer, bound for Brussels. It was Sunday morning as Arnold steamed down the Thames, away from his creditors.

Old Mr. Carr had come up to town for a few days. He had interviews with Sir Cupper Leech

and Dr. Hawkshaw touching the state of health of Mrs. Carr. And he went into the City. He was one of those old gentlemen who are never comfortable unless they can go now and then into the City. Why they go, what they do when there, I have never been able to understand. Perhaps a committee of bankers and brokers picked from Birchin Lane and Throgmorton Street might be able to afford information on the subject.

"Lincoln's Inn Fields," said old Mr. Carr, as the footman assisted him to mount into the carriage again; "the offices of Messrs. Holroyd and Hopegood. Andrews knows on which side of the square to find them."

Soon the carriage stopped again. The footman was sent into the offices to make inquiries. He returned immediately with information.

"Mr. Hopegood was out—Mr. Hopegood, junior was in—would be disengaged in two minutes."

"It's the young man I want to see," said Mr. Carr quietly, as he got out of the carriage. Mr. Hopegood, junior, was soon at liberty.

"How do you do, Mr. Carr?" he asked, smiling, rubbing his hands, leading the way to his quiet snug room, about which there was a lingering odour as of sherry. (The wine was hidden in the

bookcase, behind Barnwell and Alderson's Reports, on the second shelf. The lawyer professed to keep the wine for the refreshment of very depressed clients, but it did not appear that he refrained from referring to it now and then himself, quite as often, I should say, as to the volumes of Reports screening it; and certainly he was never depressed himself.)

"Pray be seated, Mr. Carr. Unseasonable weather, is it not?" and then he asked himself, "What does the old fellow want, I wonder? He's a good client—though he doesn't give us all his business. Deuced shrewd old dog!" then aloud, "I'm sorry my father is out, Mr. Carr; but he's just gone round to the Rolls for a few minutes."

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Hopegood," said the old gentleman; "I hope your father is well. You can do perfectly well all that I want. Better than your father, indeed. I want but to put a few questions, to obtain a little legal assistance. We can manage this I fancy, without our being under the necessity of mentioning names at all."

"Certainly, Mr. Carr."

"There is always an awkwardness about mentioning names. Let me put my case then in this way. A.'s estate is mortgaged—heavily mortgaged

to B. A. is seriously indebted to C. D. and E. I don't want to introduce more technicalities than I can avoid. Upon the petition of C. D. and E., A. is made bankrupt. You follow me?"

"Exactly."

"Now, will the fact of the bankruptcy necessitate the sale of the mortgaged estate, upon the chance, that, if sold, it may produce enough to pay off B., and leave a balance for distribution among the other creditors?"

"No. The assignees of the bankrupt may not deem such a course advisable. There may be many reasons against it. For instance, B., the mortgagee, might refuse concurrence in the sale."

"In this case we may take it that B., the mortgagee, *would* refuse concurrence."

"You see if B. throws difficulties in the way, possessing, as he probably does, the sole means of verifying the title, and refusing to produce these, or to satisfy any intending purchaser in regard to the title, what are we to do? The assignees of A. have no more power in the matter than A. would have if not bankrupt. He might file a bill to redeem, compelling B. to take his money back and re-convey, and then the estate might be sold. But

I fancy the assignees would rather shrink from going to the Court of Chancery; they would weigh the certainty of the expense against the chance of profits arising from the sale when it took place—and, indeed, they could not go to the court without the consent of all the creditors, or a majority of them after a meeting held, or with the express sanction of the Commissioner. You see that the probable result would be that the estate would not be sold."

"I see; provided B. would not assist."

"Exactly."

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Hopegood. I think I understand the matter very clearly, thanks to your assistance. I think, too, that we need be under no immediate apprehension in regard to A.'s estate." He rose to go: he shook hands with Mr. Hopegood, junior, but as he moved towards the door, he turned and said,—

"But one thing more. Suppose the case to stand as I have put it, with this addition, that B. becomes bankrupt as well as A. What then becomes of the estate?"

"Ah! then, my dear sir, the estate is in serious peril. B.'s assignees will collect all his assets—will realize his securities — they would call in

this money—foreclose the mortgage—sell the estate."

"And all this would be done rapidly?"

"Very rapidly. Legal wheels have been well greased by reform. We can proceed at a great pace now."

"Thank you. I understand perfectly. When B. is bankrupt, we must look out a-head. Good morning." And he took his departure.

"Home," he said to the footman, who imparted the information to the coachman, and the carriage rolled away from Lincoln's Inn Fields.

"A clever old file that," said Mr. Hopegood, winding red tape round his fingers mechanically, as he pondered over his conversation with old Mr. Carr; "he'd have succeeded as a lawyer. I wonder now what his little game is?"

He took out the sherry from behind Barnwell and Alderson to warm and quicken, perhaps, his imaginative faculties, and he passed a silk handkerchief over the bumps of causality on his forehead, as though to polish them up for the occasion.

"To secure Oakmere Court, and annex it to Croxall? I shouldn't be surprised. I always did think that country neighbours preyed upon each other, like big fish upon little ones. It's astonish-

ing how the love of land grows upon a man, particularly his native land. Certainly there is nothing like freehold property. It's such a comfort being away to look at it, and sit down on it, and walk on it, up and down, and over it. Compare it to investing in railways! To have nothing but a few beggarly scraps of paper in a tin box, and to call *them* money and capital. Bah! give me land, with a long deed of conveyance and a fat abstract of title—that's business, that is, and pleasure too."

It may be as well to say here, that thanks to creditors C. D. and E., Mr. Arnold Page was made bankrupt; all proper formalities being regarded—a docket being struck, a petition to the Chancellor on the part of the creditors being presented, and a fiat being opened. (I cannot attempt to explain to the reader the meaning of all this legal slang. I must ask him to take for granted that it is correct.) Arnold Page's name appeared in the list of bankrupts in the *London Gazette*, and a day was appointed at which he was required to surrender himself, and submit to be examined, and otherwise comply with the requirements of the bankrupt laws.

CHAPTER V.

TWO OF A TRADE.

In the shabby lodging over the water—the reader has already contemplated the slovenly, slatternly, disreputable "interior"—two men sat, leaning over a small Pembroke-table, on which were strewn various written and printed documents. One man—he has been known to us rather by the sobriquet of the "doctor" than by any other title—had taken off his coat, probably for great coolness, or that it impeded the free movement of the muscles of his arms: there are some men never happy when completely attired, who cannot even eat their dinners without removal of upper garments and generally much unbuttonment. He sat in his shirt-sleeves—they did not obtrude evidence of recent washing—unfastened at the wrist, and exposing his brawny, hairy, sinewy arms and hands, terminating in blunted, bitten, horny, not clean finger-ends. He wiped every now and

then his red, blotched, dank forehead with a crumpled, ragged, dull-coloured cotton handkerchief. He was smoking the stump of a clay-pipe, black from use and dirt; the tobacco of a most unfragrant strength. He puffed great clouds intentionally, as it seemed, in the face of the companion opposite to him at the table—laughing coarsely and brutally when the smoke made the other man cough, or the accumulating density of it caused him to rise from his seat and beat about with his thin grisly hands to disperse the vapour. The other man was Monsieur Anatole. His greasy pocket-book was in front of him. He occasionally took a pinch of snuff from his silver-gilt box, with the free painting on its lid.

"It is a pity," said the Frenchman, in reply apparently to some observation made by his companion; "you are a man of great ability, but of little ambitions. You take a small shopkeeper's view of transactions. You do not appreciate what I may call the political economy of investment and speculation. You lay too much stress upon the system of small profits and quick returns. It seems to be simple and wise—it is really foolish and rash. What avails it always to be at work drawing in your net? you will catch more fish by

waiting. One good haul is better than ten bad ones; and you will have toiled very much less. Be sure I am giving you the best advice for you and for myself."

And monsieur smiled—his old smile, full of a strange mocking meaning—sinister, menacing.

"You give me plenty of jaw—I know that, mounseer. Plenty of words, deuced little else," the other man answered rudely. "You're for ever telling me to wait and wait; we're to grow rich by-and-by. Meanwhile I starve. I'm sick of waiting, I tell you. I want money, and I'll have it."

"Bah! it is folly to gather an unripe harvest!"

"But we shall wait and lose all. Wind up now, I say. We shan't get all we expected. But we shall make a good haul. We shall make sure of the money from the Ostrich at any rate."

"It will be very rash; suspicion will certainly be excited, attention will be drawn to us. No; we must wait. I tell you we *must*."

"But there will be money wanted; there will be premiums to be paid."

"Well, they shall be paid if need be. What is your English proverb which bids you not to lose your ship for a hap'orth of tar?"

"You have money, then?" cried the doctor, starting up angrily.

"No," the Frenchman answered, with some uneasiness. "I have already told you I have none. But I will endeavour to procure some. I will borrow, I will obtain money for the premiums by some means."

"It seems to me you're trying to cheat me. Look out, if that's the case. It's my belief you are making a purse for yourself out of the partnership funds. By heaven! if I thought that"—and the doctor brought a clenched black fist heavily down upon the table.

"Don't be foolish. It will benefit you very little to quarrel with me. Do you want to dissolve partnership? Take care; this policy is in my name, it stands as assigned to me in the books of the company." He pointed to a large folded document before him. "You will be entitled to one-half—when the life of the assured drops—and the policy becomes payable. But it will rest very much with me as to the proportion you will receive."

"If I thought you meant to cheat me!" growled the doctor.

"Be assured, my friend, I mean nothing of the

kind. But our plans are not yet complete. There are the other policies to be obtained."

"Yes; but, I fear," the doctor spoke hesitatingly, "I fear there will be some hitch about the other policies."

"Ah! how so?"

"Mind—I have been fulfilling my part of the arrangement. I was to do all I could to effect insurance upon *his* life." (He jerked his thumb over his shoulder, as though to indicate some one in an adjoining room.) "You were to take what steps might be necessary to make the amounts insured become payable; you know what I mean," he added, in answer as it seemed to another of Monsieur Anatole's smiles. "I couldn't do that, I own, myself. I'm no coward, but I couldn't do that. A man who's chummed with me a long time now; whom I've eaten and drunk with, the last especially; whom I like rather than not. I couldn't——

"Hush!" Monsieur Anatole interrupted softly; "why speak of such things?"

"Well, I've done my part, as far as I could. Some of the policies have been obtained. I've taken care of him, patched him up, got him through the examination. But of late, he has not been well enough to pass."

"Because you have neglected your trust. Because you have not watched him. You have not taken proper care."

"I have done all I could, and I tried a bold stroke yesterday. I went in his stead to an office of repute. It is better not to mention names. I underwent examination for him! I borrowed his name for an hour or two. I cleaned myself, dressed myself respectably, and marched before a board of directors; was examined by a medical officer, who seemed satisfied with the captain's health, though he thought there might be an additional premium to pay, perhaps, on account of long residence in India."

"It was very bold," the Frenchman remarked, thoughtfully; "it was too bold!"

"It may be so; because I can't go on with it; because I can't go to that office again; because, in coming away from it, I met some one who, I have since ascertained, is connected with it; who may have recognized me; made inquiries; given warning."

"Ah!" cried the Frenchman, drawing in his breath as though in pain, "if that should be so?"

"It will be better as I have said, to make sure

at once, if we can; the time has come for you to fulfil your part of the engagement."

"No; if suspicion has been excited it will be more than ever necessary that we should wait until it is allayed. We must do nothing; we must keep very quiet; we must pay the premiums that are falling due. It would be very clumsy work to bring on a crisis at such a moment. To draw all eyes upon us. Bah! it would be madness!"

"You find excuses for waiting in everything, it seems to me," the doctor growled, sulkily. "Suppose I refuse to wait?"

"Why trouble me with so unlikely a supposition? I think, my friend, that you have lost your wits since your meeting with—Dr. Hawkshaw? Is not that the name of the gentleman you encountered on the steps of the insurance office?"

"What do you mean by that?" cried the doctor with an oath.

"Bah! you know what I mean!"

"Have you set spies upon me? Have you had me followed?"

"Sit down. Dont enrage yourself needlessly."

"Take care," cried the doctor. "I'll have no

nonsense; I'll stand none of your infernal humbug, mounseer. I know you. I know all about you."

"Sit down," Monsieur Anatole repeated, and this time with an air of command that influenced even his turbulent companion, who shrunk back involuntarily into his chair. "Sit down. Don't talk like an imbecile. You don't know me; or if you do, you know nothing by which I can be affected. No! I have lived some years." He chuckled grimly. "I have followed pretty well my own devices, and yet I defy the world to bring to my charge anything of which the law can lay hold. And I have lived under very particular governments; and I have lived to see and take part in many strange events. For you, my friend, I think you have been less fortunate."

"I don't understand you," muttered the other, moodily, gnawing his fingers.

"Pardon me. But you do. You may search through the archives of the police for my name in vain; that is," he added, as though correcting himself, "in connection with a conviction. I have wandered in many lands. A speculator, an *entrepreneur*, a gambler even. I will not gainsay you. I have lent money; I have borrowed money,

I have discounted the bills of others; I have had my own bills discounted; I am a traveller. It was in India I made the acquaintance of our admirable friend in the next room. I had money transactions with him. He became a client of mine; introduced me to his daughter, the amiable Janet, for whom I conceived a regard tender as it was supreme. Let that pass. What more do you know of me, my friend? Nothing. It is folly for you to pretend it. But for you——"

"Shut up, can't you?" growled the other, between his teeth.

"But for you," Monsieur Anatole continued, without regard to the interruption, taking snuff with calm pertinacity; "but for you—it is altogether different. As I have said, you possess an extraordinary ability; but you have never known how to apply it. Will it please you to be called by your real name, Pratt; or your assumed names, Monkton, or Luce? I believe there are some others, but it is needless to remind you of them. And it is immaterial, so far as we are now concerned. Your first error—at least the first which brought your name on the books of the police—was a curious one. It arose from your great talents, from your extreme want of caution; and

the stake was a very small one, a poor fifty pounds; and detection so imminent! You passed an examination before the College of Surgeons, in the name of another, for whom you endeavoured, illegally and mischievously—because an incompetent surgeon can do so much harm to his fellow-creatures—most mischievously, to obtain a diploma. It seems you are clever at passing examinations for others. But you were detected at the last moment. Was not Dr. Hawkshaw one of the examiners? It would be curious if it should be reserved for him to discover you now as a counterfeit Captain Gill. Let us hope that he did not do so, did not remember you. Years have passed, and you have much changed. Years passed by you—how? In prison, I think. I have the particulars in my pocket-book. Certainly, part of the time in the House of Correction, Cold Bath Fields—eighteen months, if I remember rightly. Next you were in trouble about an assault—a rather murderous assault; then I think you were lodging in Horsemonger Lane Gaol (what a frightful name that is!), convicted upon a charge of embezzlement; afterwards you were sentenced to transportation, for an offence which the English law calls arson, committed with the

view of defrauding a fire insurance company. Well, it now seems that you are turning your attention to fraud in connection with life insurance. You are a just man. You like to rob all alike: it is only fair. I have but to add one circumstance, then I will stop. I am sorry to have bored you—as you English say—but it occurs to me, Doctor, otherwise Samuel Pratt, born of respectable parents at Homerton, aged forty-three, that you have returned from transportation in a manner unexpected by the police, unlawfully, without a ticket-of-leave. Is that so?"

"It's a lie!"

"No, it is not. I only asked you out of politeness, not because I didn't know. But you are right to deny it; denial is always, or nearly always, the safest plan in any case."

The doctor—Samuel Pratt, as his real name appeared to be—had paled very much during the Frenchman's narrative; his sinewy grimy hands trembled, though he clasped them together as though to restrain himself and obtain command by an effort over his nerves. His eyes rolled, taking stealthy glances only at the Frenchman, unable to meet boldly his fixed reptile gaze.

"Why, why do you tell me all this?" he asked

at length, querulously, rather than with his usual courageous rudeness.

"My friend, it has seemed to me necessary that we should thoroughly understand each other," said Monsieur Anatole; "and you have been inclined to force this line of conduct upon me. I have suffered very much. I have overlooked very much. I am not a complaining man; it is very disagreeable to me to be finding fault. I have been willing to make allowance for the manner of your nation, always coarse, gross, defiant—what you call, bullying. You threaten me; I smile. You insult me; I laugh: but you attempt to upset my plans, I rise, then, and I upset you—figuratively, of course, I mean. I have endeavoured to avoid this, but it is no longer possible for me to do so. So, then, at last, I speak out. I warn you. I let you know. I tell you plainly that I am the master, and that I will be obeyed. Do you hear me, my friend?"

"I hear you, curse you!"

"Ah, you are rude; it is your insular manners; you have to be pitied, more than blamed. No matter. For the future you will not dictate to me. You will obey me in everything. If I say, 'Wait,' you will wait without a murmur. Have

no fear; you shall have your full share of the profits of our partnership. But you will learn this fact: you will repeat it over and over again to yourself until you remember it, until it is graven very deep in your memory: it is this"—he stooped to whisper in Pratt's ear—"*I* am the master, and I will be obeyed, or——"

"Or what?" asked Pratt, with a shudder he could not control.

"Oh! you wish for the alternative? You are curious, my friend. Well—or I will go to that window. I will fling it up. I will beckon to that man below; the man in the shiny hat, the shiny cape; he is busy just now with the servant washing the doorstep over the way; but he will hear me if I call; he will do his duty if I say to him, pointing to you: 'Policeman, that man is Samuel Pratt, escaped convict: you will arrest him. You will take him to the nearest station-house. You will lock him up very tight, till he is again brought up, again sentenced;' but not again to escape, they will take good care of that."

"You forget I could split upon you; blow all your schemes to the air," said Pratt.

"Pardon me, my friend. I do not forget. I know that you might talk. I know that you

might say many things; but I know also that you would not be believed. I know that your accusation against a citizen of France, as I am, in intimate connection with the Government of his country, as I am—I know that your talk would be disregarded, laughed at. Have *I* to fear a charge brought against me by a convicted felon, an escaped transport? It is folly! I fear you not. No, Samuel Pratt, you have great abilities. I admit it; but you cannot cope with me. What could you say, after all? That insurances have been effected upon the life of our excellent friend with sinister motives. Bah! prove your words. True, I have effected insurances: or policies in his name have been assigned to me. What then? I am a creditor of this worthy gentleman's. I have naturally an interest in his life, or, which you will, I am about to become his son-in-law. I am affianced to his daughter Janet. Again, I am permitted to have an interest in his life. For his state of health, what does that matter? What do I know? I am not medical, and I have not appeared in the matter. He has been examined by the officers of the company. It is nothing to me. What do creditors ever know of the state of health of their debtors? What do the habits

of fathers-in-law signify to sons-in-law? Tell me, my friend? Point out to me, if you can, a flaw in my conduct upon which the police can put a finger. Bah! I defy you."

Mr. Pratt seemed to be silenced, if not convinced. He drummed upon the table.

"There's one thing you forget," he said, at last, fiercely. "Open that window to shout to the bobby, and I fling you out neck and crop; or I get my hands round your throat, not to let go in a hurry!"

Monsieur evidently winced at this speech. Perhaps he was not physically brave, or he had underrated the ferocity of which his comrade was capable. He recovered himself, however, as he said jauntily, with a laugh—

"For shame! you don't do yourself justice—not common justice; and a gentleman who has had the advantage of a medical education! Fie! It would be all very well for a labourer on a railway, a mere navvy, poor creature—he knows no better; but for you, who have passed an examination at the College of Surgeons, I did not believe you capable of such folly. I thought you, a man of your ability! quite above tying a rope so tightly round your own neck. You would stoop, then,

for the sake of a petty vengeance, to a murder of the stupidest, the commonest, the grossest kind! I had a higher opinion of you!"

The jeering audacity of these remarks rather cowed the other man; he began to feel himself unequal to, outbid by, the Frenchman.

"Stow it, mounseer, do—it makes a fellow's flesh creep to hear you talk; while to hear you laugh goes through one like a knife."

"The knife again! Truly, my friend, you have coarse ideas and associations," laughed Monsieur Anatole again. "But we will 'stow it,' then, as you say. Only you will remember, for the future, *you* will obey; *I* am the master!"

"All right!" growled Pratt. They shook hands upon it; the small skinny claw of the Frenchman seemed quite lost in the great black fist of the doctor.

"We shall get on better for this," said Monsieur Anatole, cheerfully; "we have cleared the air; we can breathe now more freely." And he gathered together the papers on the table, including the policy of insurance, and thrust them into his capacious pocket-book.

"Only don't try to sell me," said Pratt, with a resumption of some of his old insolence.

"Only be obedient—" and the Frenchman pointed meaningly to the window as the doctor raised his black hands with a clutching action.

The door opened, a third man entered the room.

"Well, and how does our excellent friend, Captain Gill?" inquired Monsieur Anatole, with a leer.

Captain Gill looked like a man but recently out of bed. He was only half-dressed; his hair straggling over his puffed face; ordinarily red and bloated, now pale, almost livid. His eyes were bloodshot, staring; his expression vacant and wild.

"I say, you know," he began, "a fellow can't stop here. We must get out of these lodgings at once. Why, they've got snakes in the house; snakes and crocodiles, and all sorts of creeping things, and they've got into the bedroom; they have, 'pon my soul. Crawling about the bed-clothes, under the bed, you know. It's horrid. A fellow can't stand it, you know. I daren't go into the room again. I wouldn't go there for any money."

He glared about him. His eyes settled at last upon a black bottle on the mantel-shelf. He made a staggering dash at it, secured it, and held it to his lips.

"Take it from him," said Monsieur Anatole, in a low voice of command.

"Gently, old boy, that'll do;" and the doctor wrenched the bottle from the captain's hands. Monsieur Anatole smiled, as he said to himself—

"He's getting very ripe for an accidental death! What do I say? Lock him for an hour in a room with a bottle of cognac, and he would make a neat suicide of it; but not suicide as it would be understood by an insurance company. And there would be no one to blame, no one. Keep an eye on him," he said aloud. And he took his hat and went out whistling.

"If I thought that he meant to sell me?" Mr. Pratt sat brooding over this idea, every now and then clenching his black fists to shake them threateningly at vacancy.

The Dom Ferdinando El Rey Silver Mining Company at Tezcotzinco had given promise of being a very prosperous undertaking. Its capital was to be 500,000*l.*, in 50,000 shares of 10*l.* each; an amount of ten shillings per share to be paid on the application for allotment, twenty shillings per share on the allotment, and a call of 5*l.* per share six months afterwards. The scheme was very favour-

ably received by a speculative public. Some three-fourths of the shares had been applied for almost before the prospectus had been fairly issued. The object of the company was to work the celebrated mines at Tezcotzinco, long known as among the richest in the world, and closely adjoining the Dom Bobadillo mines, which had returned such enormous profits to the proprietors. The working of the mines would be extremely simple, neither pumping nor lifting being required. Evidence in possession of the Board of Directors exhibited a money value of discovered ore equal to several millions sterling. The vein, or lode, extended across an entire mountain ridge; was of the enormous thickness of from eighteen to twenty feet, and, in some places, was of still larger dimensions. The company proposed to itself other sources of revenue. It would open up immense tracts of luxuriant land for cultivation; it would construct a railway from the mines to the nearest navigable river, and widen and improve the seaport, which it was proposed to purchase absolutely. The soil was of an amazing fertility; the climate pure and salubrious; the mountain-sides were clothed with primeval forests, abounding in timber adapted for all building, naval, and cabinet-making

purposes; the whole region was enriched with all the treasures of the tropics. It was computed that by their trade in cochineal, dyewood, fruits, and lignum-vitæ, the proprietors would realize an enormous profit upon their outlay. A lease of the Tezcotzinco mines for a term of 999 years, with full right to work all the mines already discovered, or thereafter to be discovered by the company, of gold, silver, copper, lead, and other ores, extending over an area of seventy square miles, had been purchased for an amount to be paid partly in cash and partly in shares of the company. The promoters of the undertaking were to be remunerated largely out of the first moneys that should come to the hands of the company (which was completely registered), and applications for shares were to be made by a given date, upon an accompanying form. An Irish nobleman had been secured for chairman, and there was an imposing array of directors, bankers, brokers, solicitors, agents, managers, &c.

Such is an abridgment of the original prospectus of the Dom Ferdinando Mining Company. The name of Arnold Page, Esq., of Oakmere Court, Oakmere, Woodlandshire, and of the Temple, London, did not appear in the first list

of directors. He was added to the Board, under the power which had been reserved from the first of increasing the number of the directors. The influence of his brother-in-law, Mr. Lomax, a large proprietor in the undertaking, seemed to be sufficient to effect this little arrangement, and Arnold Page sat weekly at a large baize-covered table in a dim house in a murky street in the City, and tried to persuade himself that he was becoming useful in his generation, and that he understood the affairs of the Dom Ferdinando. He sat before a sheet of blotting-paper with a pen in his hand, anxious, it seemed, by way of doing something, probably, to add his signature to anything that came in his way; it was occupation; it saved him from going to sleep; it very nearly prevented him from yawning. He was a regular attendant at the meetings of the Board, moved by his new-born desire to be of service, to be industrious, to abandon the pleasant grace of his old lotus-eating life, and to give a helping hand to the progress of the world. And he really had faith in the worthiness of the company; believed the glowing reports of the agents and correspondents at Tezcotzinco; examined the long lines upon lines of figures that jostled each other in

the computations and calculations of the managers, and put implicit trust in the promise that the results would realize to the full the sanguine expectations of the promoters. Many weary hours he devoted to the business of the company. He was quite "a mod-el derack-terr," as the secretary (a Scotchman) more than once informed him, with a grin, intended for cheerfulness, but really ghastly in its effect. Very likely, thus employed, Arnold had often thought longingly of his now less frequent pleasant gossips with Lord Dolly at the Junior Adonis, or the old chats upon art with Jack Lackington, or of listening to the charming tenor of Rob blended with the bass of Mr. Gossett in an operatic duet; more often still of the delicious meetings with Leo, now growing fewer and fewer, all by reason of his unremitting attention to his official duties. It was but sorry consolation, after all, for missing these things, to reflect that he was in his brother-in-law's words, "qualifying himself for parliamentary life," "acquiring an interest in business undertakings of considerable importance," "educating himself for a future share in the carrying on of public affairs." A director of the Dom Ferdinando Silver Mining Company,—indeed, he was—thanks to Mr. Lomax's introduction—a

member of the boards of other companies. It is not necessary to go into detail concerning these, or to cumber these pages with useless repetitive narratives touching what may be called Arnold's city career. The Dom Ferdinando may be taken as a fair sample of the schemes with which it was his evil fortune to be connected.

It is not to be supposed, however, that *he* only, as an individual, fell among thieves; that he was the only honest man at a table of rogues. There were other gentlemen reputable as himself who had permitted their names to ornament the prospectus of the Company, influenced very much by motives similar to his own; a want of occupation, a desire to be useful; though, perhaps, far more than he did, they cared for the remuneration attached to the post of director. A Board seems to be always composed of King Logs and King Storks, the Storks being in a minority, and yet managing somehow to rule, and finally to devour their associates. One thing, the chairman couldn't lose much. It has been said that he was an Irish peer: and, moreover, he never attended the meetings of the Board. The Storks were glib, shrewd, mysterious men, intimately acquainted with the management of public companies, who seemed to

qualify for their seats at the Board by allotting themselves shares and owing the company the amount due in respect of the allotment; who quite overawed the Logs by their superior information upon business topics, and bewildered them by the use of a language—it might be called Stock-Exchangese—which no efforts of the Logs could render into intelligible English. The Logs were, for the most part, retired military men, troubled with the notion peculiar to retired military men: that they are intimately acquainted with business affairs, and valuable members of a commercial community. With what bewildered, dazed, fuddled looks they watched the proceedings before them! Brave old gentlemen! yours is a humiliating position; and very dear at the price, though bought at two guineas, an attendance, and an excellent lunch, served by the company's porter. Certainly it is a sad spectacle; and yet a laughable practical joke, to see two Indian colonels inspecting the books and auditing the accounts of a mining company. "This is the ledger, is it? Ah! And this the cash-book? Dear me! Beautifully written. This the day-book—the journal—the bill-book. Ah! I see. Yes. You copy from one into the other. *Post,* you call it? Exactly.

Very nice, indeed. I suppose they add up all right?" And they retire to the Occidental Club, agreeing over their mulligatawney, that the Dom Ferdinando is a wonderful company—wonderful, by Jove! That accounts are extraordinary things —quite extraordinary, by gad! And they sign a balance-sheet ("Dam rum-looking thing," they mutter), and report to the proprietors that they have examined the books and accounts of the company, and find everything to be in a highly satisfactory and flourishing condition.

It has been stated that the undertaking had been well received by the public; but an arrangement of that sort is simple and easy enough. The promoters of a company take steps to ensure its triumphant reception, just as a manager buys bouquets to hurl to his new prima donna, or hires claqueurs to applaud in the pit, pre-determining a tremendous success. By-and-by, of course, comes the reaction—a drop in the receipts, a vacuum in the treasury, empty benches. That can't be helped: bring out your next novelty, and dismiss your prima donna; get out of the company; get up another; bolt with your profits —with anything else you can lay your hands upon, if need is. The market had been skilfully

manipulated; the prospectus made its appearance at a period when, according to the City intelligence of the newspapers, money was particularly easy. The shares were at one time quoted at a high premium, the result, it was generally believed, of some very adroit bulling manœuvres conducted by a secret committee of the Storks of the Board. But there had been something hectic about the business. The shares seemed liable to great fluctuations in price; the quotations were as unsteady as the pulse of an unhealthy man. The weekly share-list showed extraordinary variations in value; the shares going up and down as suddenly and uncertainly as the barometer in squally weather. The pilots, who had often weathered Capel Court storms, began to shake their heads as they considered the Dom Ferdinando; they began to think the ship wasn't altogether sea-worthy, and to look to escape by means of the boats, selling out at once, and securing such small premiums as could then be obtained. It was, perhaps, about this time that Mr. Lomax began to feel uncomfortable qualms; he had sadly over-bought; in the event of a sudden rush over the side of the ship becoming necessary, he had certainly cumbered himself more than sufficiently to sink him. He

transferred a large share of his risk to his brother-in-law. There was a lull, a partial recovery; perhaps there was relenting on the part of the "bears;" or they had made enough for a time, satisfying their expectations, or not caring to kill the golden goose outright. The ship rode on tolerably well; nobody particularly caring to ascertain exactly how much the leak was gaining on the pumps. A few months and there was a great cry, a strange bubbling sound; money was very tight, it seemed, and the ship was settling down bodily.

I am anxious not to weary the reader with the minutiæ of the misfortunes of this dreadful Dom Ferdinando company. Information touching the collapse of bubble companies is to be gathered from many and convenient sources. In the columns of the newspaper are to be found revelations identical with the story of this shameful undertaking. I refer the reader to these. The case was a very glaring one. It seemed to be streaked in all directions with fraud, as a human body with veins. It was so leavened with chicanery, that the whole affair bore the aspect of a gigantic swindle. It was very hard for innocent men to disentangle their innocence from the débris of dishonesty. It was harder still to answer the

question ceaselessly screamed out by an infuriated body of swindled proprietors—What has become of our money? No one seemed to know; only that there was nothing left. Not a halfpenny in specie, and a terrible list of liabilities. The large sums received from the shareholders had ebbed away through the fingers of the directors, and sunk, as, it were, through some great hole in the floor beneath the board-room table. There was endless confusion. The books of the company were handed over to professional accountants; but there was no one who could give any explanation. The Storks, to a man, had disappeared; for the most part, in some mysterious way, enormously enriched by the whole business. Whether the company thrived or failed, sunk or swam, in its poor days as in its palmy, these clever gentlemen managed somehow to derive benefit from the undertaking, and then at critical moments contrived to elude pursuit and to suddenly disappear, pretty much as ingenious evil spirits down trap-doors in pantomimes. *Sauve qui peut* had been the cry as on the occasion of other crises, and many had made good their escape. The agent at the mouth of the mine; the manager and director in London; the Scotch secretary; every underling who, by any

means, could thrust his finger into the pie, upon the chance of a sovereign sticking to it as he withdrew it, these had clean gone, past all finding out. There remained—upon whom to wreak the wrath of the proprietors—the wretched Indian colonels, and the other King Logs of the Board of Directors; including, of course, Mr. Arnold Page, of Oakmere Court. And as a tribe of Choctaws, infuriated at the escape of certain of their victims, determine that the remainder shall be put to worse and worse torture, to more and more horrible punishment, so the shareholders cried out for condign vengeance to be visited on the heads of the poor Log Directors. They were made bankrupts, to a man. Every farthing they possessed was seized upon, and they stood awaiting the terrible examination before the Commissioners; the brow-beating of a host of opponents; the butts of the newspapers, serious and comic; to be questioned upon all sorts of things; betrayed into contradictions; teased with inquiries concerning matters of which they knew nothing, when they should have known so much; bewildered with the books and papers shown to them, certified by them, signed by them, innocently, ignorantly, of course, yet guiltily and fraudulently, as their

opponents persisted; worried pitilessly, like noble quarry at the mercy of curs. Poor souls! They were paying a heavy price for the two guinea attendances and the excellent luncheons. And our Arnold was of these; utterly ruined, surrendering everything, asking only to be set free to starve!

Monsieur Anatole was sitting in the *Café de l'Univers*. He waited until the other guests had departed. He then approached the *dame de comptoir*. Madame Desprès received him with a superb smile. They proceeded, as it seemed, to serious converse. Monsieur Anatole drew from his pocket-book a ragged bundle of papers; Madame Desprès handed him in exchange a dirty canvas bag, probably containing money; finally Monsieur Anatole took his departure.

He did not know that a man had watched him through the plaits of the muslin veiling the glass door. The man was Pratt. He escaped just in time to avoid encountering the Frenchman.

"At least I know one place where to find him," growled Pratt, as he retreated. "But how does he get money from that woman?"

Louis, the waiter, sat scowling at a marble table,

reading, or affecting to read a coffee-stained *Indépendance Belge.* Madame took his hand: he snatched it from her.

"He is a millionnaire," she said, with an air of apology. He is a supreme speculator. He has undertaken to negotiate for me an investment, which will repay to me a profit enormous —superb! We shall be rich, Louis. We shall be *rentiers.* I hold ten shares in the company of the silver mine of Dom Ferdinando. It is an enterprise sublime—glorious! Ah! how I long for that old black pocket-book of Monsieur Anatole!"

CHAPTER VI.

PUNISHMENT.

Up and down, up and down the sycamore avenue in the garden at Croxall Chase paced Leonora Carr.

Of late a change had come over her looks. An expression of suffering, of sorrow, was now upon her face. She was very pale. The small delicate features seemed smaller, more delicate than ever; yet the brown limpid eyes were surely larger, with such an earnest appealing piteousness in their gaze: though prone now to fill with tears upon very slight provocation—a chance word, a sad thought, a mournful memory. The rich brown hair looked more than ever luxuriant and profuse, perhaps because it was less heedfully tended—thrust back negligently from her forehead, and suffered to fall in thick twisted loops about her neck, and even on her shoulders. How slight now, yet how charm-

ingly lithe her beautifully proportioned figure: to which thinness could never give angularity; there was such softness in its outline, such a tender grace in its every movement. She seemed to have grown taller, perhaps from a certain calm stateliness that had recently come to her, replacing that girlish mobility of expression, that vivid fervour of manner for which she had been at one time remarkable.

She was not alone. A visitor had called at the Chase—Lord Southernwood. He had ridden over from the family seat of the Southernwoods at Gashleigh. The London season had commenced; but the Carrs had not left Croxall: the state of health of Mrs. Carr not permitting of her removal, and Lord Southernwood was at no loss to account for his still lingering in the country; for instance, the wishes of his sister-in-law, the bereaved Marchioness; the recent demise of his brother—surely these were sufficient reasons for his absence from the gaiety of town? though it is possible they might not altogether explain his visits at Croxall Chase, which had become of late more and more frequent.

Leo and his lordship had been for some time in the garden occupied evidently with a conversation of much interest.

"And those were the very words he used?" she

asked, in a choked voice, as Lord Southernwood finished speaking.

"Yes, indeed, Miss Carr, as near as I can recollect them."

"Poor Arnold," she said, and the tears rushed into her eyes; "and yet," she added half aloud, "could he have ever given me up like this if he had loved as I have?"

"I'm very sorry, very sorry indeed, if I have said anything to pain you. I am, upon my soul, Miss Carr," urged his lordship, piteously.

"No, no; it is only right that I should be told, that I should know all. You must not wonder that it has made me sad, very sad; for I have loved Arnold so dearly! Could I help it? I may speak of it to you, who are his friend—yes," she went on in her simple, touching tones, "and my friend, too, are you not? I have known him so long now, so very long, ever since I was quite a child. I remember his father also. Good old General Page! such a noble-looking old man, with quite white hair, a great friend of papa's, who never came over to see us but he remembered to bring toys or sugar-plums for me; and he would make me hunt in his coat-tail pockets for them, and pat my head and smooth my hair—so good, and tender, and loving to me

always. And Arnold was so like him; and he'd come to romp with me, and was never tired of doing all he could to please me—was never rude or rough with me as some boys are when they play with children. Do you think I can ever forget these things? I have been used to be petted and made much of, spoiled perhaps; but I can never forget those who were so kind to me; and was it wonderful that I should grow up to love him? Is it strange that I should now be terribly pained when he is sad and in trouble? And when he told me of his love, and asked me for mine, he knew it was his before he asked for it, and it seemed only natural and of course, that I, who had loved him all my life, should be his wife at last. And this is to end now, and we are to be nothing more to each other, and we are never to meet again, never!"

She stopped, overcome by her emotions. Lord Southernwood could do nothing but watch her tenderly, with a reflection of her suffering upon his face. He did not dare to say more; indeed, he was accusing himself of brutality for having said as much as he had, bringing those tears in the eyes of the woman he loved. He looked very wretched, and what chance was there, he asked himself, of a successful issue to his suit? How

could he hope for the love of this poor sufferer, whose love had already been given so wholly to another—to Arnold, and was his still? How could it be otherwise?

"I do wrong to give way like this," Leo said, quickening her steps as she brushed away the tears from her eyes. "I do but pain you, and I do no good to myself, or indeed to any one. Pray forgive me. I shall grow stronger soon. I shall learn to forget, perhaps."

"I'm sure if I could do anything, Miss Carr, I would," said his lordship, in sad accents. "If I could serve Arnold in any way, if he would only let me, heaven knows I'd do it."

"I know you would," she exclaimed, and almost involuntarily she gave him her hand. He received it blushingly, holding it with a timid reverence.

"Such a good, true fellow as Arnold has always been. All the fellows liked him; so cheerful, and jolly, and that," his lordship stammered.

"Thank you," she said, with kindly eyes, "for speaking so of him. I like to hear you praise him. I could always listen to praise of him. There, I'm better now. I think I'll go in now. They'll wonder in the house what has become of me."

She turned to leave him.

"And—and you'll think over what I've been saying, please, Miss Carr," he urged, with a rueful, imploring air. "You won't forget. You'll try to think as well as you can of me, please. I'm not like Arnold, I know; I'm miles off him; but I love you, indeed I do. I never loved any one as I love you. I'll do all I can to make you happy. I——"

"Hush!" she said, half closing her eyes, like one in acute pain; "no more now, please; no more now."

"But I may hope, ever so little? please tell me that. Don't drive me mad; let me hope that some day, a long time hence——"

"Oh, hush!" she repeated; "not another word of this now; not for a long, long time. I'll try, indeed I will. You've always been so kind to me. I'm sure you will be so still. You've been his friend and mine, Lord Dolly, dear Lord Dolly; and I have always liked you, and I'll try—only let me go, please let me go now, and don't speak of this;—not for a very long time."

She broke away as he took one of her hands and pressed it to his lips. Another moment and she had left him, to enter the house, and remove as best she could all traces of her recent emotion from her face.

Lord Southernwood took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"What a darling she is; how I love her! By Jove, I would do anything she told me. Perhaps it *is* rather hard to be able to win smiles from her only when I praise *him*. But isn't it natural? He is a good fellow, and I couldn't say a word against him, not if I tried ever so. It is natural that she should love him; but I think she will love me too—a little, in the end. I'm sure she will! How I love her! I'd jump over the moon if she asked me to; at least, I'd try to do it. There's no folly or insanity I would not do, if she bade me, to see a smile upon her dear little lips, to catch a bright glance from those jolly eyes —how they run through and through a fellow! I'm going mad I think—mad with love I think; and I'm trembling all over, like a jelly. I never felt anything like it before."

Some months have elapsed.

It is necessary that we should register certain changes that have meanwhile taken place in the situation of divers of our friends.

The chambers in Sun-Dial Buildings have been given up; the fittings and furniture have been

sold for the benefit of the estate of Arnold Page, a bankrupt. The premises bear a wholly different aspect now, tenanted by that rising advocate, Bellows, Q.C., of the Northern Circuit, member for the borough of New Gateford, who will probably be offered the Solicitor-Generalship on the break-up of the present administration, and the formation of a new ministry. All comforts and luxuries have been rigidly abolished, and the rooms are gradually resuming the appearance they boasted prior to their occupation by Arnold, and in the lifetime of old Mr. Tangleton, the special pleader. It may be stated that the many pictures which had ornamented the walls did not fetch very high prices when brought to the hammer; the works of art executed by Mr. Lackington realizing such insignificant sums as seriously to discompose that artist, affording him an excuse for abstinence from labour during many days.

Arnold had returned from the continent in due course, and surrendered, in compliance with the requirements of the bankruptcy laws. Of course he was no longer subjected to personal restraint or molestation. But he had to attend a long series of wearisome examinations before the Commissioner. He was greatly occupied with the preparation of

his schedule, in endeavouring to aid his legal advisers, Messrs. Holroyd and Hopegood, in the arrangement of his accounts. It was a tedious business; partly owing to the inextricable confusion in which he had permitted his affairs to fall, partly to his own inability to understand his own position, or to render any explanation upon various heads, or to recollect a thousand things which of course he ought to have recollected particularly. There were adjournments, and adjournments, and adjournments, until the readers of the newspapers began to cry aloud at last, asking each other how much longer they were to be bored with these repeated reports concerning the proceedings of the Bankruptcy Court, "IN RE PAGE." It was a time of terrible trial, of humiliation, of suffering, for Arnold. He bore it with great patience, with as much composure as he could possibly command; evincing an earnest desire to render all the assistance in his power to his numberless creditors, surrendering every halfpenny he possessed, doing all that was possible for him to do in atonement for his sins of omission and commission, of neglect and folly. The extent of his liabilities seemed to him to be enormous—was entirely beyond his comprehension. He failed to grasp the facts of the en-

tanglement in which he found himself struggling; he stood amazed at the long lists of debts—debts of which he had not the remotest conception. The Commissioner's mode of dealing with him was not unkind. He even took upon himself to compliment the bankrupt upon the frankness of his confession, and his apparent desire to afford aid to his assignees; while he yet lifted up his hands at the profligate rate of the expenditure, and animadverted upon the manner of life of young men of the present day in strong terms, accurately reported in the newspapers of the next morning, though the applause which followed the observations in court was of course immediately suppressed. (Why applause is to be disallowed when speeches are permitted which manifestly bid, and bid high, for applause, is of course one of those mysteries a non-legal public can never hope to penetrate.) "The bankrupt, a young man of intelligence, of education, who had mixed with the world, who was presumed to have some acquaintance with business habits—who, at any rate, had ventured to thrust himself into positions of serious importance and grave responsibility—had yet been guilty, according to his own account, of the childish imprudence of attaching his signature to documents, of whose

contents he knew nothing—absolutely nothing; he had not even read them over, barely looked at them. It seemed almost hopeless, under these circumstances, to arrive at a proper understanding of the bankrupt's case. In reference to this Silver Mining Company, of which so much had been heard in the course of these proceedings—he (the learned Commissioner) made bold to say that a grosser case of positive fraud and villany (applause, aggravated rather than put down by the greater noise of the ushers)—he would repeat, of positive fraud and villany, than was represented by this Silver Mining Company, he had never met with in the whole course of his professional existence, which was not of yesterday, as everybody in that court was well aware. Though he did not desire to add to the pain which the bankrupt must necessarily feel in the unfortunate position he then occupied, by attributing to him a guilty participation in the most iniquitous transactions of that company: indeed, it was evident that he was a serious loser rather than a gainer by his connection with it: still, in reference to his conduct as a member of the direction of the company, he was bound to say that the bankrupt had laid himself open to censure of the gravest

kind. He (the Commissioner) would say nothing —though there was plenty to be said—on the subject of the bankrupt's betrayal, by his negligence and inefficiency, of the trust reposed in him by his co-proprietors. He had been assiduous in his attendance at the meetings of the Board, but for any good he had done by such means he might as well have been a thousand miles away. The man who was unable to protect his own interests was powerless to watch over the concerns of others. Why, it actually appeared by the statements that had been made in that court—and he confessed, in spite of the extraordinary nature of the evidence, that he could not resist putting implicit faith in it—it positively appeared that the bankrupt, in compliance with a resolution passed by the Board, of which he was a member, to the effect that the directors should issue promissory notes or bills of exchange on behalf of the company, the bankrupt, he repeated—and, it was alleged, other directors, not now before the court —had been so imprudent and ill-advised as to be led to affix his name to a number of such bills without remarking that there was no mention of the bills being given on behalf of the company, thus actually pledging his individual personal

credit to bolster up the decaying reputation of this nefarious undertaking. So scandalous a case of unreasonable imprudence, to say the least of it, had never come before him (the Commissioner). The liability thus incurred by the bankrupt was of an amount that was absolutely frightful; and it was to be relieved of such and other liabilities, that the bankrupt now came to that Court. The case must stand adjourned. There must be a production of further accounts. Protection to the bankrupt would, of course, be continued. But in the present state of this case it was not possible for the court to adjudicate."

Mortified, heart-sick, terribly oppressed, Arnold left the court to take counsel with his solicitor. It needed all Mr. Hopegood junior's good-humour to cheer his client in the slightest degree.

"We must do the best we can. We'll show fight yet. We'll have another round with the Commissioner. He's giving way, I can see that. He wants to settle the case, only there's been such a confounded opposition, he's obliged to take time. But he's with us—I can see that. That speech to-day showed it. Very satisfactory I call it. He's always rather partial than not to the bankrupt who gives him an opportunity of making speeches.

Suppose we have a glass of sherry? How oppressively hot the court was, and how full! They never will ventilate law-courts enough. Somehow there seems always an objection to letting too much light and air in upon law matters. Ha! ha! Don't fear, Mr. Page. We shall be all right. Another glass? Do!"

During the progress of adjudication upon his disastrous affairs, Arnold, at the request of his sister, had taken up his residence in the house she had secured in town after her masterly evacuation of Oakmere. Mrs. Simmons learnt with regret that her lodger was not likely again to occupy her apartments in Coppice Row. Mr. Gossett greatly missed his companion, the kindly critic and the patient auditor of his vocal efforts. Mr. Lomax was still absent from England. It was now boldly stated that his connection with the Wafer Stamp Office had altogether ceased, although it was not clear as to whether he had or not been dismissed the service; the more general impression being to the effect that he had been permitted to retire upon a superannuation allowance. Mrs. Lomax averred that her husband's health was no longer equal to the severe requirements of his official career, and that, acting upon the advice of his

medical attendant, and in compliance with her earnest solicitation, he was at present restrained to a milder climate in the south of Europe, awaiting the restoration of his energies, recruiting his faculties, enfeebled by overwork and excess of devotion to the government. The gentlemen who had been his colleagues at Whitehall, whether occupants of rooms in which cocoa-nut matting, or kamptulicon, or Kidderminster, or Turkey carpets decked the floors, agreed amongst themselves that, "Somehow Lomax had gone a-mucker;" a statement which, possibly for its vagueness and incomprehensibility considered publicly, was satisfactory and congenial to their official minds. It was tolerably notorious, however, that Mr. Lomax was not likely for some considerable time to come to appear again upon the scenes he had been accustomed to adorn; and all sorts of motives were assigned in explanation to this absence, more or less flattering in their nature according as they proceeded from friends or enemies, from apologists or censors.

Mrs. Lomax, comfortably settled in a small but genteel furnished house on the outskirts of the Regent's Park, no longer deemed it necessary to maintain the rigid regard for appearances she had manifested prior to her departure from Oakmere.

She availed herself of the independence, the reticence, the isolation, so easy of attainment when you are one of a million in town, so difficult when you are one of a dozen in the country. She made but few of her London friends aware of her arrival. She entered at once upon a less expensive mode of life. She did not go into society; she entertained no company. She gave up her carriages and horses, dismissed all unnecessary servants. To the limited circle to whom any explanation was due or desirable, she gave out that she was regulating her life in accordance with what she considered correct under the circumstances of her husband's absence from the country; the growing up of her children, now, as she said, of an age when the unremitting attention and devotion of a mother was more than ever desirable; and the unfortunate position in which her brother had found himself placed. She affirmed, that these things considered, a state of seclusion and retirement was in the best taste. There was no escape from the publicity of Arnold's difficulties; it did not avail, therefore, to deny these in any way. But she made out the best case she could, hinting to the most curious of her intimates, that her own resources were crippled by the sacrifices she had made to avert the disasters

which had come upon her brother; and while she yet looked forward to a resumption at no distant date of the position she had surrendered, expressing herself most contented with, and resigned to, her present retired manner of existence. She spoke often now of her duty—she was fond of remarking that the mother of a family *must* make sacrifices. And she wore cleaned gloves for the first time in her life, and had several of her silk dresses *turned.*

It is not to be questioned, that in the bosom of Mrs. Lomax there existed for her brother as warm an affection as she was probably capable of, though beneath the weight of the sham sentiment and artificialness which had become part of her nature, it breathed with difficulty, was semi-petrified, endured long cataleptic suspensions of vitality. She sympathized with his sufferings under his reverse of fortune, and this quite apart from the fact that inconveniences were entailed upon herself by his embarrassments. She was earnest in her entreaties that he would take shelter in her newly-acquired house. "Of course, Arnold, dear, so long as I have a home, you will have one too; whatever he has done, it is not for a sister to desert her brother; if I were reduced to my last

crust, be sure that half, if not the whole of it, would be yours, my poor Arnold." There was, nevertheless, something irritating in the patronizing generosity of her manner. She either chose to ignore, or was really unaware of the fact, that her husband had largely contributed to her brother's ruin; and occasionally, in her expressions of affection and outbursts of sentiment, mingled certain peevish regrets and complaints that were very galling to Arnold. "I make no reproaches," she would say; "I make no reproaches. It is not for a sister to sit in judgment upon her brother; and, of course, it is not to be expected that I should understand all the intricacies of this dreadful business. I confess it is to me an impenetrable mystery, how all this money could have slipped through your fingers! I am afraid you have been dreadfully extravagant, Arnold. I am afraid you have neglected Frank's good offices; so competent as he has always been to advise upon business topics. And now you are dependent upon me, and the poor annuity charged upon the estate and payable under my settlement! Of course, I am only too happy to be able to assist you, even though the fortunes of my own poor dear children may be crippled to furnish you with means. I

know what duty a sister owes to her brother;" and so on. Of course this was hard to bear;—not the less so from the consideration that Arnold had been doing all in his power to screen Lomax. It had been unavoidable that his name should be mentioned in the course of the bankruptcy proceedings; it was not to be concealed that large sums of money had passed from the bankrupt's possession into the hands of his brother-in-law. "It is a pity we haven't this Mr. Lomax here," the Commissioner had observed on more than one occasion. "I should like to have put a few questions to him. There has been either collusion or robbery, I won't say which." But Arnold shrank from exculpating himself at the expense of his sister's husband. "For her sake, for the children's, let me say as little as I can about him." And a long penitential letter which Lomax had addressed to him, imploring not to be betrayed, beseeching his pity and forbearance, a letter which contained a full confession of a long list of rogueries of which Arnold had been the victim, he had committed to the flames; for he found the temptation growing upon him, when Mrs. Lomax became too querulously kind and charitable in her dealings with him, to silence her by producing her hus-

band's letter. "No," he said, as he watched the confession turn to tinder in the grate; "for her own sake, for the children's, she shall not know from me that her husband is a scoundrel." So he endured on, without a word, taking his punishment, severe though it was, very manfully.

But upon one subject Mrs. Lomax said nothing: the engagement with Leo which she had done so much to terminate. She was fully conscious of the mischievousness of her conduct, though she considered it now, perhaps, past all reparation. She never opened her lips upon the matter. The Carrs were still in the country. She had not seen Leo since the departure from Oakmere. Secretly, she could not but reproach herself for breaking off a match, which, she was disposed to think, but for her interference, would have taken place, and in effect have wholly retrieved Arnold's fortune. She was unaware, perhaps, how far he had of himself retreated from a position he believed he could not hold with honour. But certainly, she had done all she could to sap Leo's faith in him, to encourage the pretensions of a dangerous rival, the Marquis of Southernwood.

So Arnold was an inmate of the Regent's Park house. Had Mrs. Lomax forgotten that he was

thus brought into a position of some danger? She had herself at one time found it convenient, for purposes of her own, to charge him with undue admiration of her governess, Miss Janet Gill. He was now under the same roof with that young lady; constantly, it could not be helped, subjected to the perils of her society; and he was in a condition of mind which aggravated the risks he was running. He had suffered very much; he had been terribly wounded in the encounter from which he had just emerged. It is always those barely convalescent from one disorder who are so liable to fall a prey to another. And it was certain that he admired Janet Gill very much. Had Mrs. Lomax forgotten these things?

In the midst of his troubles he had received a letter from Leo. It was kindly if somewhat timidly worded, containing no reference to the engagement, treating that apparently as at an end, and yet, as it were, seeking to build a friendship out of the salvage of a destroyed love, as one might erect a cottage in the country with the stones of a dilapidated palace. It expressed sincere sympathy for him, in terms so simple and earnest, that he had perhaps been more touched by them had they come to him at some other time.

But while under the fire of his examination in the Bankruptcy Court, he seemed to have no time to attach true value to her attempts at comfort. Perhaps, too, situated as he was, he found it necessary to gain strength to endure, by hardening his heart as much as possible. He sometimes tried to beat out all tenderness from his heart, as a man will stamp out fire—heedless what harm his foot may do, so long as he can extinguish the flame. He sought to forget: as though the first part of a life history could be as easily put away from one as the early pages of a book can be torn out and destroyed. He continued a long struggle with memory, in which he often came worst off. If he ever triumphed it was only for a time. There came a terrible reaction. "The past is past," he would sometimes say. "Soon I shall be able to look back half wondering, half doubting, was I ever rich? did I ever love? I shall see *her* Marchioness of Southernwood, in the crimson velvet robes of her order—with a cape furred with miniver pure, three rows and a half of ermine, and a train a yard and three-quarters on the ground. She will roll down St. James's Street in the lumbering Southernwood family chariot on the way to the drawing-room of her sovereign—while

I stand among the mob on the kerbstone splashed by her wheels, as I ask myself, looking across the chasm that divides us, Can it be, that I ever thought I possessed her love—ever strained her to my heart—ever thought to call her wife?—What an idiotic dream all this will then seem! And yet I did love her; and I believed that she loved me. Let me not blame her: what has happened is of my doing, not hers. She has duties to perform —duties to her social station, to her wealth, to her beauty. Her position in society is the more precious to her because it has been honestly fought for and won by her father and grandfather. How can I expect that she should step down to lift up the bankrupt and beggar in the kennel, who has come to grief, thanks to his own folly? No, I held my happiness in my hand, but not tightly enough —my fingers relaxed one by one, and it escaped from me like a butterfly. I have been like a gambler, who begins with a great run of luck, and staggers from the table at last, ruined and disgraced. I have lost fortune, love, and honour too, perhaps, in the world's eyes. I know that I am suspected of fraud, yet God knows I have made all the atonement possible. I have given up everything, and by-and-by the struggle will be for a

bare living!" Certainly he was going through a stern ordeal. Men have suffered as much often enough. There has never been lack of suffering in the world, the while there has been plenty of happiness and courage, and goodness too, and strength to bear. But there is great danger of emerging from such trouble either utterly cowed and spirit-broken, cast down past all lifting up again, without self-respect, bereft of the dignity of misfortune, or else cold, cynical, grim, morose, selfish. The alternative is not pleasant, and Arnold Page, graduating in the school of adversity, was in some peril of taking up poor Timon's cry, "I am misanthropos, and hate mankind!"

He sent no reply to Leo's letter, crumpling it in his hand. "Let it end," he said. Perhaps he expected to hear something from her father; but nothing came; and poor Leo waiting heart-sick for a letter, crushing her face against her pillows, wetting them with her tears, was suffering cruelly.

"No letter from him. Another day has gone, and no letter! Does he not know that at a word from him I would fly to him, I would cling close to his heart, and never—never, leave him." And the next day she would be summoned to the drawing-room, to receive that constant visitor at

Croxall Chase, the most honourable the Marquis of Southernwood. And she seemed to read in her father's eyes, though he never opened his lips upon the subject, a desire that the pretensions of the visitor should not be discouraged.

On the break-up of the establishment in Sun-Dial Buildings, what had become of our friend Robin Hooper? Well, he had secured a temporary residence in a house in Omega Street, Camden Town, inhabited, as to its first-floor, by that distinguished artist, Mr. Lackington.

"To think that those gems of art which Arnold bought of me should go for a mere nothing," sighed the painter, as he sat smoking before a blank canvas, or watching the sunlight glide round his room and fade away. "And Arnold paid very respectable prices for them, I remember."

"It was a mere accident, Jack," urged Robin; "you mustn't let it interfere with your work."

"But my dear fellow, if the public has quite made up its mind to undervalue one's work, what is the good of working? Besides, the look of the thing: one would think I had overcharged Arnold."

"Arnold never thought so. Never will think

so. He valued the pictures highly, though, poor fellow, he was obliged to let them go with the rest. And, after all, he has too many other things on his mind to be occupied with this subject, poor fellow."

"I remember Hugh Wood talking to me about it. He's a hard man, is Hugh Wood. He told me I was very selfish one day; it was in reference to those very pictures, and Arnold's patronage of my easel. By the way, it reminds me, Arnold's match with Miss Carr is quite off, I suppose?"

"Entirely, as I understand," said Robin; "it seems strange that money should make any difference. I thought at one time that love strengthened more, that people were brought closer together, in misfortune; but it seems not so, at least not in the fashionable world."

"That's the nearest approach to a sneer I ever found you guilty of, Rob; one would think you were a contributor to a newspaper: accusing the upper classes of want of feeling! Why, you'll speak disrespectfully of bishops next."

"I was wrong," said Robin; "I had no right to say that. At least, I know that Arnold wouldn't have suffered me. I suppose, therefore, that it is quite right, and in the nature of things, that his

troubles should separate him from the woman he loves."

"But will it better Hugh Wood's chance?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Hugh Wood is in love with Leonora Carr."

"Do you really think so?" and Robin mused upon the subject. "Perhaps it may be so. The fact would explain much of Hugh's apparent hardness and severity. I remember to have heard a rumour to the effect once in the country; but it was traced to his father, the new Archdeacon of Binchester. He was rather given to romancing, and sentiment, and fine talk. His taste in that way broke out now and then in his pulpit. Poor Hugh! How much disappointed love there seems to be in the world." Robin sighed.

"You think he has no chance."

"None whatever. Hugh is poor. His father's preferment won't help him. I should suppose the young lady has never given him a thought. Besides, there can be no doubt that she will marry Lord Southernwood. Arnold has said as much himself."

"Poor old Arnold. I tell you what I'll do, Rob, I'll set to work——"

"I'm very glad to hear you say so."

"Hear me out. I'll paint those pictures over again, and make a present of them to Arnold. I think it will please him."

"I'm sure it will, Jack. You've a great deal of good in you, Jack, if you would only let it come out."

Perhaps it would have been difficult to abstain from applauding the painter,—to have pondered at that moment whether justice had not a lien upon his labours that should have interfered with their devotion to purposes of generosity.

Was there any reason other than his friendship for the painter that could have brought Robin Hooper to reside in Omega Street, Camden Town? Could he have given a thought to the circumstance that the studio was at no great distance from the Regent's Park, while the park was very near to Mrs. Lomax's new house? Could he have counted upon the probability that the children of Mrs. Lomax would often, under the charge of their governess, Miss Gill, promenade in the pleasant enclosures adjoining the gardens of the Zoological Society? Certainly he made early discovery of the fact of these promenades, availing himself thereof, and renewing his acquaintance with Janet. She re-

ceived him with the gentle kindness of her ordinary manner, enhanced by a lively gratitude, a keen memory for his services in the past. He found himself upon the footing of an old friend. The children recognized him as an Oakmere neighbour, and soon prattled to him freely enough, or listened while Robin, limping as he walked between them, drew upon his imagination, and invented wonderful fairy stories for their amusement. And was there no incentive to his efforts in the fact that Janet was listening too? It was very dangerous work, Mr. Robin, so far as your own peace of mind was concerned. You were taking pains to sow, the while you know you could but reap for all your pains a harvest the richer in affliction. Over and over again he had avowed his consciousness, that to *him*, crippled and deformed, love was, must be, hopeless, futile, impossible. And yet was he not exposing himself more and more to danger; was he not baring his heart to the blow? He knew, very soon, that he loved Janet; was convinced as soon of the folly of his love: and yet did not fly, yet lingered near her, her presence but giving fresh vitality to his passion. He was acting as those foolish invalids who foster a passing malady until it becomes a confirmed

organic disease. He knew that he loved; knew, too, with the jealous quickness, the avid perception of a lover, that the woman he loved, loved another; and yet he loitered near her, aggravating his suffering, intensifying his passion.

"She loves him," he said to himself, "she loves him; or why did her face flush, her eyes kindle, when I but chanced to mention his name? Well," he went on sadly; "it is only natural, I suppose. A woman's love is drawn towards Arnold, it seems to me, almost in spite of herself. And she must see so much of him now,—now that she is beneath the same roof. I ought to have known this, to have been more prepared for this; and yet, surely, there is something cruel about it —something very hard to bear. If she but knew how much I loved her! But that's madness!"

And there were others who had discovered that the Regent's Park had become a resort of Miss Janet Gill's.

"Gaspard was right. She is to be found here nearly every day, as it seems. He is a faithful creature, is Gaspard. I must do something for him; I must speak highly of the poor fellow in certain quarters. He deserves encouragement, promo-

tion. Ah, behold her! It is as I expected, she is here to-day."

Monsieur Anatole was the speaker. He was standing in a secluded part of the park, but in such a position that he could command a view of the gate at which Janet and her pupils were accustomed to enter.

He had made certain changes in his dress. A deep crape band encircled his curved greasy hat; he wore a black coat; and round his neck a high, creased white cravat. He was, in fact, attired in mourning. Could it be that, to counteract the paleness of his face, consequent upon contrast with the deep gloom of his dress, he had slightly tinged the summit of his cheek bones with some artificial bloom? Those thin carmine clouds surely had in them something more than natural, and they were inconsistent with the prevailing sallowness of the other parts of his face; their youthful glory was so flatly contradicted by the labyrinth of crow's feet and entanglement of wrinkles in their immediate neighbourhood. The dense, luxuriant black wig had been, it seemed, freshly anointed; the curls were more than ever clotted together, matted and interwoven beneath the surface, glossy as a newly lacquered

boot. Monsieur Anatole never looked so young —or so old.

The pupils were a little in advance. They did not note the approach of the Frenchman. He removed his hat ceremoniously. Janet started as she recognized him—but more from surprise than fear. She did not now betray the alarm, the extreme trepidation she had manifested on former occasions.

"Dear Janet," he said, bowing low, "you will pardon my thus intruding myself upon your notice, interrupting your contemplations."

She made no answer, watching him with a grave, offended air.

"But I have sought you with an important object."

"Not to renew a matter at an end for ever. Not to weary me again with a suit to which you have received a final answer?"

"Alas! I comprehend to what you refer. No, my Janet; I will, since you desire it, refrain from touching upon that subject. I will leave it to some happier occasion. You are hard with me, cruel; still I do not despair. To true love there is no such word. I come to speak to you of your father, the excellent Captain Gill."

"Say what you have to say, and leave me."

"Ah, my Janet, prepare yourself for a severe trial. Life is uncertain; life is full of troubles. Be assured, beautiful angel, of my sympathy, my devotion. But you cannot doubt of these. The orphan should find in every man a father, a friend, a lover. I will be all to you now, my Janet, do not fear."

"What does this mean?"

"The brave soldier will never draw sword again. The dashing *sabreur* is no more!"

"My father is dead?" She turned very pale. Her breath was very short, as she asked the question.

"Alas! yes, my Janet; the Captain Gill is dead." He waited for a few minutes, peering at her through his fingers. He had taken his hat off as he announced his news, and assumed a theatrical attitude expressive of grief, his eyes covered by his hand. Janet did not speak.

"I am aware," said Monsieur Anatole, "that between you and your admirable parent there had been of late differences of opinion. Some discontinuance, it may be, of the affections which should ever unite a father and a child. Alas, that there should ever be these family divisions; and yet

they would seem to be inevitable! But these will now be forgotten."

There was something so false and mocking in the tone and manner of this man, that natural sorrow could not show itself in his presence. Tears seemed stanched by his influence: as bleeding is stayed by caustic.

"When did he die? and where?" Janet asked, nervously.

"In prison; three days since. Poor man, his free, gallant, noble spirit confined within the walls of a debtors' gaol—it was terrible! He was very poor; there are many expenses to be borne, in order that due respect may be paid to his remains. I would cheerfully find money for these if—if, indeed, I were able. But, alas! I have made large payments lately. I have incurred serious losses; and it might not be agreeable to you that I should take upon myself this expenditure."

"This is all the money I have in the world," she said. She took out her portemonnaie, and, opening it, shook the contents into his claw-like hand, held out before her, compressed into the form of a cup.

"This is but little, my Janet." He eyed it mockingly. She shuddered.

"What more can I do?" she asked, in a tone of despair.

"Ah! the pretty ornament on your neck—the cross, gold and turquoise—you will add that. I will convert it into money."

It was the cross Leo had given her. Slowly and sadly she took it from her neck and handed it to Monsieur Anatole.

"Take it," she said. "You will let me know when the funeral has taken place. Then, you will never see me again."

And she left him.

"Edith," said Rosy to her sister, "did you see Miss Gill give a lot of money to a beggar? How good she is."

"He wasn't a beggar."

"He was; one of those beggars who try to look like clergymen, and sell sealing-wax. I've often seen them in the streets."

If Monsieur Anatole had known that his careful toilet would thus be spoken of by so juvenile a critic!

CHAPTER VII.

MRS. LOMAX'S GOVERNESS.

THE house occupied by Mrs. Lomax was situate in a road divided from the park by a winding canal, crossed here and there by small light suspension bridges: a semi-detached house, of modern structure, and of cheap Italian architecture.

Soon after her return with her pupils from their morning promenade, Janet was informed that Mrs. Lomax desired to see her for a few minutes in the back drawing-room. This apartment had been devoted to much the same purposes as the boudoir at Oakmere. It was regarded as sacred to Mrs. Lomax's repose, and to the nursing of her headaches. Many of the decorative articles of furniture had indeed been brought from the original boudoir, especially the china and glass ornaments; so that, with the blinds down, and the mistress of the place in her accustomed attitude

of languor, the back drawing-room near the Regent's Park bore a considerable resemblance to the lady's sanctum at Oakmere Court.

Mrs. Lomax acknowledged, by a slight movement of her head, the entrance of Janet.

"I am sorry to seem to be finding fault in what I am about to remark, Miss Gill. I shall be even more sorry if I occasion you pain by the course I propose to myself to follow. Still, plain speaking is very desirable at all times, and indispensably necessary on very many occasions."

Mrs. Lomax paused for a moment, as though waiting for an acknowledgment of the truth of her proposition. Janet bowed slightly.

"I must admit that I shall lose your assistance in the education of my children with considerable regret. Still I am compelled to inform you that the time has come for our separation. I must beg you, therefore, to look elsewhere for an engagement as governess."

Janet received this announcement with some surprise.

"May I ask the reason for your taking this step, Mrs. Lomax?"

"Under the circumstances, I have no objection to your inquiry; at the same time, I guard myself

—you will so understand me, if you please, Miss Gill—from any admission of a right on your part to question me. You have acted with much imprudence, Miss Gill. I don't desire to use words needlessly harsh or displeasing to you. I lay nothing further to your charge, therefore, than extreme thoughtlessness. But you have so far forgotten what is due to me and to my children as to allow some one to accompany you during your walks in the park. This person, a young man named Hooper, is the son of a farmer near Oakmere. It is not for me to pronounce upon his conduct. He has received much kindness—foolish kindness, I may say—from my brother; who even permitted him to reside in his chambers in London. My brother Arnold is not very discreet, and certainly in this case, his pity for the young man's affliction—he is, as you know, sadly crippled and deformed—got the better of his judgment. This young Hooper's station in life should have prevented my brother from admitting him to terms of intimacy and friendship. Kindness to our inferiors and to the unfortunate is, of course, desirable, commendable; but there must be limits. The young man has presumed to become the companion of yourself

and my children; he has permitted himself to address them upon terms of equality. I believe he has even called them by their Christian names. I am at a loss to understand how you could have suffered such things to go on. Your conduct has been seriously reprehensible."

"I regret that you should think so," Janet said, calmly. "I received great kindness from Mr. Hooper some time ago now; kindness I can never forget."

"That may be, Miss Gill," Mrs. Lomax admitted, with a severe air. "It is a matter upon which I must decline to enter. I cannot allow my children to associate with this young man. I must recommend you to take warning from this affair in any future engagement you may hold."

Janet bowed; lowering her head, perhaps to conceal the curl of her lip, the flush upon her cheeks.

"And it is on this account you desire me to go?" she asked.

Mrs. Lomax hesitated a little.

"Yes," she said, at last; "on this account. But I deem it my duty to address you also on another subject; and I don't wish to conceal from

you that it affords an additional motive for my bringing our agreement to an end."

She paused to refresh herself with her scent-bottle. Invigorated, but still languid, and with half-closed eyes, she resumed—

"I refer to the presence of my brother in the house."

Janet started at this unlooked-for beginning.

"As I have said, my brother, Arnold, is not very discreet. Perhaps he has not yet arrived at a period of life when one is entitled to look for much discretion. I don't wish to attribute blame to you, Miss Gill. I am aware that a governess is often placed in a position of some embarrassment from the attentions of visitors and others not sufficiently mindful of her real station in the household. My brother's conduct in this respect has not escaped my observations. He has certainly sought your society far more than there was any occasion for. Of course it is not possible to prevent communication between two persons resident beneath the same roof. But considering his position and your own, I fear you have rather encouraged——"

"Pardon me, Mrs. Lomax——" Janet began, a little warmly.

But Mrs. Lomax was not to be interrupted.

"One moment, Miss Gill, if you please. I do not wish to pain you in any way. I am quite aware that your experience as a governess is very limited. It is very excusable if, placed in a position of some difficulty, owing to the thoughtlessness of others, you have been at a loss how to act. The attentions paid to you by my brother Arnold were, no doubt, as agreeable as they were flattering. But it seems to me it would have been more prudent in you to have at once prevented any repetition of them. I am sure your own good sense would have pointed out to you a plan of accomplishing this, which would have been without offence on the one hand, while it would have been effectual on the other. Young men are very careless how their conduct may be understood or misunderstood; how attentions that really mean nothing may be accepted as meaning a great deal. Of course, in your position, a young woman is entitled to do the best she can for herself; it is only natural that she should be ambitious. Governesses have frequently made very advantageous marriages. But I have my duty to perform. I have to caution you as to your future conduct. I must ask you to relinquish any hopes

you may have entertained with regard to my brother. I shall now be happy to hear anything you may desire to say on this unpleasant subject before we dismiss it finally."

Janet's face was crimson, and her voice trembled as, with evident effort, she said—

"I will say but this, Mrs. Lomax: that you have misunderstood me, that you have not done me justice. Let all be as you wish."

"Thank you. We will regard the matter as settled, if you please. I am far from wishing to inconvenience you. You will let me know as soon as you have heard of anything likely to suit you. I shall be happy to report favourably of your ability to impart instruction."

Janet quitted the room. She hurried to her small bedroom at the top of the house. There, alone and secure, she surrendered herself to a passionate burst of tears.

"How cruel she is!" she exclaimed. "Yet surely *he* does not know of this. No, no! I wrong him by the thought. He is too good and generous. I must go—I must never see him more! Would I had never seen him. Have I, then, no friend in the world?"

She thought of Leo, and put her hand to her

neck to feel for her cross. Missing it, the memory came to her of how she had disposed of it, and why. And she wept afresh.

"I am alone, then, in the world—quite alone! My poor father dead!" She shuddered. "But he never loved me!—he never could have loved me!"

Her long rich golden hair had come streaming down at the side of her face. She moved to the small glass near the window to rearrange the stray tresses. It was impossible for her to avoid seeing that she was beautiful.

"How pale I am! how sad I look!" she said; and then in a low suppressed tone, "Oh, if *he*—if Arnold would love me a little!"

It was the morning after the interview between Mrs. Lomax and her governess.

Again Janet had set forth for a walk with the children in the Regent's Park. They had passed over the suspension-bridge, but had not yet crossed the carriage drive and entered the enclosed part of the park. A quick footstep behind them caused Rosy to look round abruptly—

"Why, here's uncle Ar come to walk with us," she cried, clapping her hands.

"You be quiet, Rosy, and walk on with Edith.

I've something to say to Miss Gill. I'm going to ask her if you've been good lately, and if she can let you off your French exercise this afternoon."

"Oh, thank you! How nice!" And she put up her face to be kissed previously to marching on with Edith, in advance, as it were, of the main body of the party.

"Forgive me, Miss Gill," said Arnold, turning to Janet, "for intruding upon you here. And indeed I fear I have to ask your forgiveness in other respects. I was yesterday, by a mere accident, in the front drawing-room, and could not help overhearing a great deal of a conversation between yourself and my sister which was carried on in the back room. I will not tell you how grieved I was to hear what I did hear."

Janet trembled, and her face flushed. She did not trust herself to speak.

"I am sure we shall all feel your loss very much. To me it will be more especially painful, because, as it seems, your leaving us is attributed to what my sister is pleased to term indiscretion on my part. I will not stop to ask whether this may have been so or not. I know it would avail little for me to attempt to correct the opinions Mrs. Lomax has adopted upon this subject—even if

you could be prevailed upon after what has happened to stay with us; and I think I know enough of you to say that that is not likely. But at least you will pardon me my share, whatever it may have been, in your dismissal, cruel and foolish as I must ever think it."

He spoke in a low tone, with some embarrassment, for the subject involved considerations of a delicate nature. But in his manner there was a kindness that approached to tenderness. Janet's heart throbbed unsteadily.

"Indeed," she said, as calmly as she could, "I have nothing to forgive." She put out her hand as she spoke; the gesture was half mechanical. Her face crimsoned as she was made aware of what she had done, by finding her hand enfolded in Arnold's.

"You are generous—kind to say so." He held the hand longer than there was any real occasion for, or he would never have become conscious that it was trembling a good deal, sending, as it seemed, strange thrills through his frame. At particular moments, in certain conditions of the heart, there is something very electrical about the unexpected encounter of hands—something very perilous to future peace of mind. He released his fluttering

prisoner at last, unconditionally; it is always a difficult matter to know what to do with prisoners. Janet's hand fell down to her side; one moment, and she was in an agony at its captivity; now there was positive pain about its freedom. She did not know what to do with it. She was in the plight of those nations which, we are told, are unfitted for liberty, and rejoice in despotism.

"I fear," said Arnold, "I am now without such little power as I ever possessed to be of use to you. But I trust you will not quit my sister's house until you are sure as to the safety of your next step. I will engage—at least I can control Mrs. Lomax so far—that your residence with us, while it lasts, shall be made as agreeable to you as possible. But I trust that you have other friends who can be far more useful to you."

She shook her head sadly.

"I am alone in the world. I had but one living relative—my father—and—and he could not have helped me. Now he is taken from me."

"Captain Gill is dead?"

"Yes. I learnt of it only yesterday. I cannot pretend to regret it as a child should regret a parent's loss; for my father had not been himself for some time. He was very ill in India. He became

the victim of very strange associates—I think his mind became affected—seemed to lose all interest in, all regard for, his children. He tried to force upon me a marriage—but I will not speak of these things. They are over now for ever. All his errors are atoned for now. I will try always to think of him as I remember him years ago—not —not as he was of late!" And she shuddered.

She had been speaking hurriedly, as though glad to enter upon any topic that promised avoidance of the danger that lurked about such proceedings as the joining of hands or the meeting of glances accidentally laden with tenderness.

"And have you no one to whom you can now apply for advice and assistance?"

"Yes; I have one friend who I know will assist me. Leo—Miss Carr."

Arnold started.

"You are right," he said, in a strained voice. "Leo will do all she can for you. She will be always good, and kind, and true. Let her know how you are situated. I am sure you will not have to ask in vain for her aid."

Janet raised her eyes to look into his face. Much of the story of his engagement was of course known to her; and perhaps there was something

more than the feminine curiosity natural under the circumstances, which prompted her, as she watched him, to ask herself the question—"Does he love her still?"

There was certainly a little awkwardness in being caught with that expression of anxious inquiry upon her face.

"Well, uncle Ar," said Rosy, returning, "are we to be let off our exercises? Are we to have a half-holiday this afternoon?"

Janet replied to the question. Histrionic talent seems to come quite naturally to women.

"Yes;" said Janet, smiling. "Mr. Page has interceded for you. You are forgiven your lessons, but only for this afternoon. You must work very hard to-morrow to make up for lost time to-day."

Rosy hurried off to convey the pleasant intelligence to Edith.

"Pray, count me also your friend," said Arnold, availing himself of the opportunity eagerly, with some abruptness. "Pray believe me sincerely interested in your welfare, and that I will do all in my power to secure it. Pray believe this. I am your friend, always your friend, Janet—Miss Gill, I mean."

He quitted her, crossing the road, and entering the enclosure.

"She is very beautiful," he said to himself. "There is something very winning about that gentle voice, that graceful repose of manner, those deep, melting blue eyes. How happy the man will be who gains her love. What happiness to come weary, and wounded, and deeply troubled, to rest upon that true, tender, loving breast. Poor Janet! She has seen great sorrow; and is yet patient, and enduring, and calm. I'm sure I trust she may be happy. What does Georgina mean by treating her so cruelly? Well, all I can do to help her, heaven knows I will do!"

He was so occupied with these thoughts that he failed to perceive that there was some one walking at his side and endeavouring to arrest his attention. He turned, however, when he felt a light touch on his arm, and found Robin Hooper limping along close to him.

"Ah! Robin, old fellow, how are you?" he cried; "what do you do here? Have you come into the park to meditate upon future poems? Are these lime-tree avenues genial to the muse? How does Camden Town suit you? and how is Jack Lackington? and what is he doing now?

You see I have a thousand questions to put to you."

He did not appear to notice,—but then he was, perhaps, talking a little at random, absorbed by other considerations, wrought upon and elated by rather intoxicating considerations—he did not notice that Robin bore upon his face traces of excitement, and moved along with greater difficulty, seemed more lame and crippled, than ever.

"You have just left Miss Gill—Janet Gill?"

"Yes; that's so, Rob."

"I saw you. I have been watching you for some minutes."

Arnold gazed at him rather suspiciously—curiously. There was an acrid tone in Robin's voice, a querulousness about his manner.

"What's the matter, Rob?" he asked. Robin breathed hard, waited for a few moments; he hardly seemed able to speak.

"Take care what you do, Arnold," he said at length.

"Why, what do you mean, old boy? What's gone wrong? What's the matter?"

"Don't be cruel, Arnold. Don't trifle with her. I know that men think lightly of these things, make sport of them, seem to think there is a

pleasure in playing upon a woman's feelings; touching upon certain notes and then listening coldly and critically to the effect produced; employing words, and phrases, and tones, that really mean nothing, and yet which seem to mean so much; giving a strange language to a sensitive woman to construe, as it were, and laughing at the mistakes she is led into by her ignorance, her weakness, her trustfulness."

"What *is* this all about? What are you driving at, my dear Rob?"

"I have noticed this before to-day, often. The net seems very negligently spread, but the birds are secured by it not the less certainly. I don't accuse you, Arnold. But *her* happiness is at stake, however much you may trifle with the game. It may be pleasant to you—to me, I own, it seems very hateful—to tender trash to a woman and watch while the poor soul takes it unsuspectingly and treasures it in her heart as something beyond all price."

"Will you be a little more explicit, Rob?" Arnold asked.

"It is difficult to speak more plainly on the subject, painful to allude to it at all; and I know that so much rests with your nature, Arnold, and

you are hardly to be held accountable for it. You are always, unwittingly, it may be, so picturesque in the presence of women, so attractive, so winning, because you are so subdued, deferential unto tenderness. You are misleading, while you are not dreaming of anything of the kind. Your voice softens, your tone becomes so sympathetic, you seem to concentrate your interest; what woman can help exaggerating her ideas of your regard for her, giving significance to commonplaces, attaching importance to trifles?"

"This might be flattery, Rob, if you were less serious, less angry."

"Bah! Don't speak like that, Arnold. I will be plain with you since you wish it. You are trifling with the feelings of Janet Gill!"

"Robin!" cried Arnold, with a start.

"I have tried not to think so. Heaven knows I would rather not think so. But I cannot altogether close my eyes. I have watched you. Yes, and I have watched her, when she has least suspected me. I have tested her; I am not deceived. I would not speak like this, if I were not sure. She is hardly herself aware of it, I think."

"What do you mean?" Arnold asked again, rather because Robin had paused and it seemed

necessary to say something, than because he was wholly conscious of what he was saying.

"Do you require to be told?" said Robin, in a pained voice. "Be it so, then. She loves you!"

Arnold was silent. He bent his eyes upon the ground, he pressed his hand upon his heart.

"No," he whispered hoarsely, at length. "You are wrong, Rob; you must be wrong, I think. It cannot be."

And yet, could he help drawing some comfort from Robin's statement? To be loved, loved by Janet! What a pleasant haven of rest seemed open to him in the fact of her love. How doubly precious, after the disappointments he had endured, after his sufferings, the harassing trials of his misfortunes. He was greatly in the mood, as most hapless lovers are, fresh from a recent trouble, greatly in the mood to be won by this unexpected love dawning suddenly upon him.

"She loves you; she loves you!" Robin seemed to find a morbid pleasure in the pain the confession caused him. "You are my friend, over all. I have never forgotten it—I can never forget it—only, don't trifle with her. Be kind to her, for her own sake, for yours, for mine. Don't let her

give you her heart, to take it back again, broken, crushed. I can say no more. Be true, be generous, if only because she loves you, as I know, I am sure she does. Good-by, I can say no more now."

And painfully excited Robin moved away, and had soon disappeared from the park.

"Can this be?" Arnold asked himself, and he flung himself into a seat.

He remained for many hours in the park. Again and again he went over the circumstances of his acquaintance with Janet, to see if any ground for Robin's charge could be discovered. "Have I misled her in any way?" he asked himself. "Have I even by accident induced her to believe that I love her? Poor child! If this be so, I must make all the reparation possible. And if she loves me——" but for some time he did not even mentally complete this sentence. But he brooded over the fragment.

"Do I love her?" he asked himself, seeking to probe his own feelings on the subject. "No," he answered, with some hesitation. "Not—not as I loved, as I love Leo. But do I love her sufficiently? Do I love her enough to justify my encouragement of her affection? Enough"—he

went on after a pause—"enough to marry her? Why may I not make her mine, for ever, and be happy with her, as I should be; who can doubt it? She is as poor as I am: at least, the question of money can never come between us to part us. Our positions are equal so far; if, indeed, a governess is not rather degraded by marriage with a bankrupt. To quit England for ever: thousands of miles away, where men will know nothing about me—will care nothing—there, to work for my living, and for Janet, to toil and to die. To go away never to return, with Janet as my wife, earning her love honestly, loving her in my turn—humble, hardworking, contented, happy. Would not this be the best? Indeed, I think it would."

So for a long, long time he discussed the question with himself. Now convinced, dismissing the subject as settled; now doubting, beginning anew, going over all his arguments again and again; wearying himself terribly, and leaving off at last perhaps not much nearer adjustment than when he commenced. He rose and quitted the park depressed in spirit, with an aching head, a heavily laden heart.

It was not only Robin Hooper who had wit-

nessed the interview between Arnold Page and Janet, had noted, among other circumstances attending it, his pressure of her hand, his reluctant relinquishment of it. A handsome barouche had been rolling along the road at the precise moment of that meeting of hands. The carriage contained one person; a lady, leaning back, richly dressed, but pale and delicate-looking, with an air of languor and dejection about her. It was Leo.

She started as she recognized Arnold and Janet, turned paler than before, frowned, bit her lips, shivered, and then had passed on. The footman, looking back by chance a moment afterwards, fancied his young mistress must have some painful fragment of dust in one of her eyes—certainly she was holding her handkerchief to her face.

The Carrs had come up to town; were again in Westbourne terrace. It was found desirable that Mrs. Carr should be within immediate reach of the best medical advice. Her state of health was precarious; but she had borne the journey to London tolerably, and it was thought that she was improving. Sir Cupper Leech, Dr. Hawkshaw, and other physicians had met in consultation concerning her. They were of opinion that their

patient would yet do well, if only her strength could be kept up.

The Marquis of Southernwood was also in London; but was not seen much in public. He had only shown himself once or twice at the Junior Adonis; but it was rumoured that he was a frequent visitor in Westbourne Terrace; constant in his inquiries as to the health of Mrs. Carr.

He had not, however, ventured to renew his suit to Leo. He noticed, with pain, that the young lady looked pale, and worn, and sad; that her old glad, bright manner was exchanged now for a calmness that was almost apathetic; a quietude that seemed to arise from extreme listlessness and weariness. People said that she was worn out with attendance upon her mother, a great invalid. The Carrs had been out very little during the season, on the same account, it was alleged.

It was not, then, in the character of an affianced lover that Lord Southernwood came so constantly to Westbourne Terrace; he stood in the position of a trusted and intimate friend. There was something touching, as Leo could not but often acknowledge to herself, about the kindness of his forbearance. He attempted to con-

strain her in no way; he never even hinted at his suit; suppressed all mention of his love. Yet there was a lover's homage in his manner, an infinite respect, a hushed tenderness, that must have appealed to the heart of any woman. And there was necessarily growing, day by day, in Leo's mind, a stronger and stronger conviction that she was parted from Arnold for ever—that the engagement was ended, past all revival or renewal.

Lord Southernwood found her one day in the drawing-room, returned from a drive in one of the parks.

She was trembling nervously, oppressed, terribly cast down. He had never seen her so before. His simple words of kindness and sympathy, so hearty, so truthful, touched her deeply, and, in a moment, the tears were dimming her soft limpid eyes. Something he read in her glance which sent the blood rushing to his heart tumultuously; and he ventured to allude to a subject which it had been agreed between them was not to be again mentioned.

"I am so sad," she murmured faintly; "I am utterly wretched. Be very kind to me, promise me you will."

He drew her towards him. How radiantly

happy he looked! He pressed her to his heart; and for a moment his lips touched hers.

Then he was furiously ringing the bell, calling for assistance. Leo had swooned in his arms.

Janet had continued her walk within the park with her pupils. Returning home, she remembered that she had been entrusted by Mrs. Lomax with some trifling commissions, for the execution of which it was necessary for her to quit the park to enter a street of shops in the neighbourhood. On her way, she had to pass a large corner public-house, much frequented as a resting and refreshment place for omnibuses and cabs. She noticed that a small crowd was then collected, and, to avoid being hustled and inconvenienced, she was about to leave the pavement for the road. Just then, there was a sudden surging in the group and an opening, through which she was enabled to perceive the cause of the excitement. It was a not very unusual object in a London street. A man was clinging to a lamp-post, shouting, singing, screaming, stamping with tipsy vehemence. His clothes were torn, stained with mud; his hat was in the gutter, a shapeless mass. He was a puffed-looking stout man, with a

red face, straggling light hair upon his forehead, and a shaggy yellow moustache. She recognized him in a moment, hardly able to suppress a cry of terror. It was Captain Gill! It was her father.

A shabby, tall, burly man came stumbling down the steps of the public-house, seized the captain by the collar of his coat, and was soon struggling to thrust him into a cab; the captain resisting with a drunken obstinacy. The tall man was of course Pratt "the doctor." Ultimately he succeeded in his endeavours, and the cab drove off with its unsavoury occupants, midst the jeers and laughter of the crowd.

Janet proceeded on her way.

"I have been tricked. I have been robbed!" she said. "My father lives still, then. Heaven forgive me, but it is almost in my heart to wish that he were dead!"

And some time afterwards she went on,—

"If Arnold knew! If he had seen the sight I saw to-day! What would he think? How could he love me! No—it would be impossible. He would shun me; he would hate me. Yes; I must leave this place—must leave Arnold—as soon as possible."

She hid her face in her hands.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST COLUMN OF "THE TIMES."

THE Venerable Archdeacon of Binchester wrote sometimes to his son, Hugh Wood, barrister-at-law, occupying very dingy apartments up three pairs of stairs, in a close old court in the Temple. The longest and most important portions of these letters were generally to be found in the postscript. I am enabled to furnish an extract from the correspondence of the archdeacon. The following lines, at the period of their receipt by Hugh Wood, occasioned him considerable embarrassment:—

"I am happy to say that I am settling down here very comfortably. The people in the neighbourhood seem to be very fairly impressed with the respect due to a dignitary of the church. Still, strange as it may seem to you, my dear boy, I find myself at the present moment considerably pressed for money. I would very much rather avoid, if possible, any further dealings with

Moss. I have too unpleasant recollections in connection with the last affair. Can you assist me? Even twenty or thirty pounds would do. . . . Shall you be surprised to hear that I have been seriously contemplating a change in my condition. But, indeed, I weary of my life of solitude. I long for a partner in my declining years. Why should this not be so? The engagement between young Page (who seems to be absolutely ruined—I suspected what was coming when I last saw the misguided young man in town,) and old Carr's daughter, if it ever really existed—and I have always entertained doubts on that subject—seems to be now wholly at an end. As *you* are so disinclined to move in the matter, what is to prevent *me?* There is a trifling disparity as to age, but I don't attach any importance to that; it is, indeed, as nothing, weighed against the importance the lady would gain, the high position she would secure as the wife of an archdeacon. In this country a woman's heart turns naturally to the clergy. I confess I see no reason why the affair should not be brought about. However, I cannot just now quit this place. My arrival is too recent. I have made a very favourable impression, and I must not

risk losing it. The Carrs, I find, are now in town. Will you take an opportunity of sounding the young lady, as delicately as may be, upon the subject?"

Speedily, however, Hugh was able to convince the archdeacon that his plan could not possibly be carried out. He forwarded to Binchester a copy of the *Morning Post*, in an important column of which journal was to be found an official announcement of the approaching marriage between the most Honourable the Marquis of Southernwood and the daughter of Mr. Carr, of Croxall. Of course the editor of the *Woodlandshire Mercury* had something to say upon the subject. "Did we not some time ago put our readers in possession of this important information?" And he was enabled to conclude his paragraph with a glowing eulogium of the superior intelligence of the provincial as compared with the metropolitan press.

Yes, it was true now beyond all question. Leo was engaged to be married to Lord Southernwood.

"God grant you may be happy in your choice, my little Leo," said old Mr. Carr, as he kissed her, nestling tearfully in his arms.

For the present Mrs. Carr was not informed of what had happened. She was so weakly, that

it was feared serious consequences might attend the communication to her of any news of importance. This, at least, was Dr. Hawkshaw's opinion.

Hardly a day passed now but Lord Southernwood was in Westbourne Terrace. He was in splendid spirits; how he laughed and prattled; how proud he was of his affianced wife; how he studied to please her, to anticipate her lightest thoughts and wishes; how he loaded her with presents; how he astounded Chalker by his vivacity, his volubility, his restlessness! And the fellows at the Junior Adonis learnt of it now, and discussed it freely after their manner, agreeing finally to give their approval, and to vote that Cupid had got into a good thing, and was doosid lucky and that, in having secured that doosid pretty little Miss Carr, whom they all, to a man, admired. What presents he brought to please her! It seemed as though he was for ever fitting superb necklaces round that soft throat. (What a time he was fastening the clasp! but then it's really a difficult thing to arrange a necklace upon a warm human neck, when love and admiration are distracting one's attention, and interfering with the business.) And now he was pressing,

sliding the very prettiest of rings upon the tiny fingers; now circling the delicate wrists with bracelets, and rewarding himself with kisses; or in watching his own image in miniature mirrored in her eyes;—a very dainty amusement. He was supremely happy.

And Leo? She was very busy. Was there not the wedding *trousseau* to prepare and supervise? Was it possible for her not to take an interest in the vital questions arising at every turn in connection with clothes and millinery? Was it possible for her, a woman—and a pretty woman, too—to rest unmoved while her marriage finery was strewing the house; in the presence of those enormous parcels from the mercers', from the mantua-makers; while her path was crowded with lace of all kinds, in all sorts of arrangements, with silks, velvets, satins, flowers, feathers; and all conditions of trades, and work-people pausing for her instructions, imploring to be noticed and commanded? Could she avoid being affected in some measure by a light-heartedness so contagious as Lord Dolly's, so persevering, so ceaseless? Could she, nothwithstanding all that had passed, remain wholly calm and apathetic in the presence of a love so whole, so unremittingly fervent? No.

There were times when her gaiety rivalled even his: when she met him with the gleefulness of a madcap school-girl; when her silvery laugh added music to his mirth; when she persuaded herself—wondering a little the while, it may be—that she could pay him back wholly and honestly love for love; and her interest in her bonnets, in her gloves, her thoughtful researches into quite the inner mysteries of the toilet and the wardrobe, satisfied even the most sanguine and jealous expectations of her lady's-maid: and when she would take a pride—a natural woman's pride—in dressing her best; in looking her best; in wearing her choicest smiles; decking herself with her brightest glances; and all to please him—for his sake. Yet there were times, too, when these things were not possible to her—when she would sit speechless midst her finery; cold at heart, with shattered nerves, shuddering, sick with dread, and hopelessness and sorrow; breaking into wild sobs, and passionate tears, and not daring to ask herself the reason of these; praying for the end; longing for the marriage-day to come and go, that such a wrench might be given to the method of her life that change or looking back would be then futile, impossible, and her

fate would be accomplished for good or evil, beyond all remedy.

Something like this had been her mood the day when she felt herself touched upon the shoulder, and a gentle voice said—

"Leo!"

She looked up. Janet Gill stood before her.

To welcome the visitor most cordially, to receive calmly, smilingly, her congratulations on the approaching marriage, to draw her attention to certain of the dresses, and the decorations that were to grace the occasion, were but natural duties to perform immediately at the outset of Janet's visit, to the hindrance of any other thoughts arising in Leo's breast, in reference to the interview she had witnessed in the park between Janet and Arnold, and any suspicions and jealousies thereby occasioned. Leo's affection for Janet was great; they had been closely united in the love they had both felt so strongly for poor little Baby Gill, lying dead in Oakmere churchyard. To listen with interest to Janet's story of her dismissal by Mrs. Lomax was a task readily executed, without preoccupation or *arrière pensée*. None the less was she prepared to enter into her friend's future

arrangements, or to proffer all the assistance that could be rendered.

"I never liked Mrs. Lomax. Of course you must not remain there a day longer than can be avoided, Janet. Of course something that will suit you a great deal better must be immediately obtained for you. I will speak to Lady Lambeth on the subject. I know she will interest herself about it at once. She is helping me with my *trousseau*. She was a pupil of Miss Bigg's. I know her intimately. She was then the Hon. Miss Pincott. She is Lord Lambeth's third wife. Her own children, perhaps, are too young yet to need a governess, but she is sure to know of some family wanting one. I am really glad that you are leaving that dreadful Mrs. Lomax. I am sure you have not been happy there; but how came she so foolish as to lose you?"

Janet explained Mrs. Lomax's charge concerning Robin Hooper, but she suppressed all mention of another subject upon which Mrs. Lomax had founded a complaint. Was Leo stirred by an intuition? The blood rushed to her face, as fixing her eyes upon her friend, she said in a low voice,

"And Arnold?" For a moment Janet was confused—could make no reply.

"He is well? Tell me, Janet."

"Yes, he is well; but he has suffered very much."

"Poor Arnold!" Leo said softly, with a sigh. Then, presently, "What is he going to do?"

"He talks, so I have heard, of quitting England never to return."

"Never!" and Leo started, and a look of suffering crossed her face. It was Janet's turn now to contemplate her. Involuntarily, perhaps, her eyes turned from Leo and rested upon some of the marriage finery which strewed the room. Perhaps Leo noticed this.

"Don't despise me, Janet," she said, in a voice that sounded so full of suffering that Janet sprang to her side at once.

"What do you mean, Leo?" she asked; and then to herself she added, "It is, then, as I expected; she loves him still! If there were no other reason, would not this be enough to keep me apart from him for ever? She who has been so good to me; who so loved poor Baby—dear Leo!"

Leo was seized with a sudden trembling. She clutched Janet's arm.

"Tell me," she whispered hoarsely; "you love Arnold?" She repeated the question, seeing Janet pause.

"No," said Janet with an effort. "No, indeed not."

"You are sure?"

"Arnold can never be anything to me—never."

"Never—but if he sought your love?"

"No, he will not; he must not do so. It cannot be; my love can never be his!" Then she murmured beneath her breath, "God help me; what am I saying?"

Leo took her friend in her arms and kissed her; then burst into tears and hid her face upon Janet's shoulder. "Oh, Janet, pity me; I am very wretched."

They were disturbed almost immediately, and Leo had to conceal as best she could all trace of recent emotion. But it seemed as though she were accustomed to these sudden calls being made upon her, as she was used to interruptions—to being incessantly required to attend to *this* question, to decide upon *that*. The position in which she was placed brought upon her so many occupations. A servant announced that there were two ladies waiting to see her in the drawing-room. Leo repaired thither.

A tall limp woman in crumpled black threw back a rusty veil, and disclosed to Leo's surprise

the not pleasant features of her whilom preceptress, Miss Dorothea Bigg, of Chapone House, Kew Green. She was accompanied by that "inestimable woman" Booth (the "Sarnem" of the seminary, according to the Hon. Miss Pincott), who recognized the presence of the ex-pupil by a sharp sniff and a grim courtesy, the defiance of the former, as it were, effectually contradicting any submissiveness that might be attributed to the latter.

"My dear Leonora," said Miss Bigg, with a renewal of her old frightful attempts at a smile, nd rising from the comfortable chair she had aken possession of on her entry; "how pleased I am to see you; always delighted to meet again any of my old pupils, but especially you, dear, such a favourite as you always were, too. I've come to offer my 'umble congratulations. You remember Booth—your old friend Booth"—(Booth was here subjected to a convulsive twitching about the region of her nose—her method perhaps of negativing such a statement), "Booth couldn't rest until she, too, had offered her 'umble congratulations. We read of it in the papers. So gratified. I'm sure, it must be a great source of happiness to your dear ma, to your excellent pa. And so, dear, from being simply Miss Carr

you'll become the Marchioness of Southernwood! Dear me. What a change! And how very nice, and gratifying, and pleasant to all concerned. He's quite a young man, the Marquis, I believe. I should *so* like to see him. I *have* heard that he's been a little wild, the Marquis; but of course that will be all over now. But they *do* say that he was rather dissolute at one time. Young noblemen will be, you know, dear, a little wild. I suppose the other affair is quite off—Mr. Page, I think the name of the gentleman was; some relation of the gentleman whose children were at one time under my care, the Miss Lomaxes; and very sweet children they were, I'm sure. I remember you once called with your dear ma and took them a drive to Richmond. Mrs. Lomax was Mr. Page's sister, I believe? But of course it was quite right to put an end to that arrangement. Why, dear me, I saw the gentleman's name appearing quite often in the newspaper. He'd been very unfortunate, I suppose, to say the least of it. Of course you could have nothing to say to him after that. Why, his name was in the police courts, I think; quite amongst the lowest criminals, wasn't it Booth?" (Booth vehemently affirmative.) "Why, he was brought up charged

with bankruptcy at the Old Bailey, or some such place. Wasn't he Booth?" (Booth chuckles triumphant in the distinctness of her memory of the case.) "But of course you see nothing of him now. I'm sure I hope I haven't distressed you in any way by mentioning the unhappy affair, dear. But you know how deeply interested I am in anything that concerns the welfare of my pupils. I'm sure if they were my own children, I couldn't feel more for them, and I couldn't rest, dear, until I had called to offer my 'umble congratulations upon your approaching marriage with the Marquis of Southernwood. How pleased my poor sister Adelaide would have been. I don't remember any pupil of Chapone House making a more distinguished match, although very many of the pupils have been most intimately connected with the aristocracy. My 'umble but sincere congratulations, dear."

"I am much obliged to you, Miss Bigg," said Leo, formally.

"And I hope, dear, you will think no more of any little estrangement there may have been between us," said Miss Bigg. "I know that there was a difference of opinion concerning one of the inmates of Chapone House. I refer to little Miss

Gill. Now, alas! no more. But such is life!" (Booth grunted acquiescence that such *was* life—raised her rusty kid-gloved hand for a moment to let it fall again upon her knee—an action presumed by many people to express eloquently, sympathy, and pity, and emotion generally). "You will try and forget my share in that melancholy business?"

"Certainly, Miss Bigg."

The schoolmistress moved about uneasily in her chair. There was in Leo's manner a calmness and a coolness that did not much encourage the visitor to proceed. Booth sniffed significantly, and looked at the ceiling. Miss Bigg fidgeted with her gloves, dabbed her eyes with a cambric handkerchief, in case there should be any tears thereabouts—there were none—and then continued:

"You are not aware, perhaps, how much I have suffered on account of Miss Gill. Her illness did dreadful mischief to the school. There was quite a panic among the parents; they hurried away their children, most inconsiderately, I must say. I did all I could, but at length I was obliged to give way. Now, I have parted with my interest in Chapone House. The brass plate is off the door. The celebrated seminary for young ladies

exists no more. I grieve to say the establishment has been converted into a preparatory school for little boys.

"Indeed." It was certainly provoking that this important news should affect Leo in so small a way.

"And I'm ruined. I hardly know what to do. At one time I thought even of entering the service of a widower as housekeeper. Perhaps, dear, with your numerous acquaintance, you may know of some such situation likely to suit me."

"No, Miss Bigg. I do not."

Miss Bigg again dabbed her dry eyes with her handkerchief. She then produced from her shawl a square parcel.

"I am endeavouring to raise a small sum by means of the sale of an edition of my late father's sublime work, *The Course of Life*, a soul poem, in twenty cantos. I have here a list of subscribers, containing the names of the most distinguished among the nobility, clergy, and gentry. (She placed before Leo a sheet of foolscap paper closely written upon). I hope, dear, you will allow me to put your name down as a subscriber for a few copies. Perhaps you could also persuade the Marquis to subscribe. His name would orna-

ment the list, and would be the means of attracting others. The book, I need hardly say, is an invaluable one. It is well known to every pupil at Chapone House. At page 342, you will find some very precious lines addressed to a young woman entering the married state—they are peculiarly apposite, dear, to your present position. Indeed, consolation and advice may be found in my father's poem adapted to almost every station in life."

"It's a Gospel work," said Booth. "No woman should be without it. Many a soul has been saved from perdition by it." And she looked as though she rather grudged Leo the excellent chance that was being offered to her.

"How many copies shall I put down to you, dear?" asked Miss Dorothea, in her most inviting tone.

But here they were interrupted. Two gentlemen briskly entered the room: Lord Southernwood and Dr. Hawkshaw.

"What's all this about?" asked the doctor, looking round.

"Buying books?" said his lordship, cheerfully. "What are they about? Shall I get you a dozen or so of them, Leo? *The Course of Life?* Eh?

A soul poem? What's that mean? My eyes! What a lot of it. It don't look very amusing reading."

"At page 400 there's some excellent advice to scoffers," said Booth, bitterly.

"Oh, indeed!" said Lord Southernwood; and to himself he added, "Severe old bird!"

The doctor had taken up the volume, and also the list of subscribers, in spite of an effort Miss Bigg had made to secure the latter.

"It teems with the most exquisite poetry," said Miss Bigg, chafing her hands, rather with the air of a tradesman recommending his wares.

"It looks as though it did," the doctor remarks, dryly. "But somehow I don't think I care much for poetry. It seems to me that poetry is too often prose with its stomach out of order, and wanting physic very badly indeed."

"It's my late father, the poet Bigg's sublime work—full of piety, the salvation of many a sinner," Miss Bigg said, indignantly.

Booth added, "And so stirring."

"It may be. But I don't think I'm to be stirred—*by a spoon*," and the doctor smiled grimly. "I hope I'm too solid."

He turned to the list of subscribers, and read from it.

"The Lord Chancellor, 10 copies; the Archbishop of Mesopotamia, 12 copies; Lord Bethesda, 20 copies; the Bishop of Binchester, Lord Lambeth, Dr. Grawler, D.D., the Rev. T. Pott, the Bishop of Otaheite, Mr. Trimmer, M.P. Hullo! Dr. Hawkshaw, M.D., 6 copies."

Miss Bigg shrank back as the doctor turned his sharp eyes upon her.

"It's a mistake, I think," she stammered. "Or else, you were put down, in anticipation of your approval."

"Which you'll never get," said the doctor sternly, "I tell you so at once. I know something of the poet Bigg, and I wouldn't have any of his rubbish in my house, not if you paid me for it. It's my impression that he was an immense humbug!"

"Oh! why don't the ground open and swaller him up!" groaned Booth.

"Take my advice. Don't go on with this sort of thing. There's a class of people well known to the police, and recognizable by others, under the title of begging-letter impostors. Try not to be mixed up with them: though many of your proceedings bear a strange resemblance to theirs. For this list, I believe it contains very many mistakes

similar to the one you have made in connection with my name. So we'll dispose of it at once." (He tore it up.) "And now, I think there's no one here who wants a copy of this precious book, and therefore you'd better go."

Booth uttered an explosive "Oh, indeed!"

Miss Dorothea Bigg glanced round her, but she saw that her chance of obtaining subscribers to the sublime work was not just then very promising. Leo had withdrawn with his lordship to a window, where they appeared to be holding quite a confidential discussion. The schoolmistress gathered up her books, and with a severe courtesy quitted the room.

Dr. Hawkshaw was summoned upstairs to attend his patient, Mrs. Carr. She had been dozing a little; and there had been some doubt at first about disturbing her. She was so reduced in strength that rest was very valuable to her. The physicians had agreed that if she were asleep when they paid their visit they would return to see her at a later period of the day. Dr. Hawkshaw found Sir Cupper Leech engaged in serious conversation with old Mr. Carr. They were leaning against the mantel-piece in the small dressing-room adjoining the chamber occupied by the invalid.

Presently the nurse who had been attending in the sick-room was despatched to inform Leo that Dr. Hawkshaw desired to speak to her. She quitted Lord Southernwood hurriedly, and found the doctor waiting for her on the landing of the staircase. She was in some alarm, seeing him look very grave and pale.

"Don't be frightened, my dear," he said, kindly and gently, "but your father desired me to speak to you. He is rather unnerved this morning; he did not feel equal to it himself. It is no longer to be disguised that our poor patient is in great danger. Pray be calm, my dear—be brave. It will afflict papa so terribly if you give way. Take courage. Yes, my dear, I fear the worst. She has awoke in a state of extreme exhaustion, and we have agreed that unless a very extraordinary change takes place there is no hope of her rallying. Don't cry, my dear. Be as brave as you can, for her sake, and for poor papa's, upon whom the blow will fall very, very heavily. When you have a little recovered yourself we will go into the bedroom. She is quite herself now—quite calm and sensible; though, poor soul, so exhausted, that she can hardly speak. I have been expecting this: though it has come upon us much more suddenly

and rapidly than I had looked for. She is sinking fast. I fear in a few hours all will be over. There, there's a brave girl. Dry your eyes; and now we'll go into the bedroom."

Leo suffered herself to be led into the bedroom. She had but a dreamy consciousness of what she saw there, her sight was so dimmed, her brain seemed so bewildered. She had afterwards a vague memory of the stately florid figure of Sir Cupper Leech at the side of the bed: close to him her father, pale, shaking, leaning upon the bed for support; and the face of the invalid, wasted, waxen-looking, death-stricken. She stooped down to kiss the faded lips, the sunken cheeks, the shadowy hands stretched out helplessly on the counterpane. She had never once dreamt of her mother's illness terminating fatally; yet now the conviction came to her that day by day the evidence, as it were, had been accumulating, and the proven fact was before her: she stood in the solemn presence of Death! The awful change was going on under her eyes, and the good, kindly, loving lady was to be taken from her for ever. She could not speak; her tongue seemed paralyzed, petrified; the tears gathered in her eyes, till the whole scene seemed to swim before her;

she could only bend lower to press again and again soft kisses upon her mother's face.

Dr. Hawkshaw kept his hand upon the dying woman's wrist. Every now and then the physicians exchanged sadly significant glances.

"She is trying to say something," said Dr. Hawkshaw. "Listen, my dear. Stoop down."

"God bless you, Leo, dear. God give you happiness, my darling. Always love your husband—love Arnold. Be a good wife to him. I've always loved Arnold; he always reminded me so of my poor Jordan. Don't cry, my dear. You'll take care of our little Leo, Carr! God bless you, dear. You've been a good husband to me."

More she said, or tried to say; but nothing further was audible or intelligible. Only a moan now and then announced that the sufferer still lived.

Soon Doctor Hawkshaw was to be seen stepping into his brougham, rather worn and depressed, looking as befitted a man who had been fighting with death, and been worsted in the conflict. In the absence of any order being given, the coachman always understood that he was to drive home to the doctor's residence in Mount Street. For some minutes the doctor was so preoccupied that he failed to notice which way he was being taken.

"Poor woman! The end came sooner than was expected. But when a constitution once gives way, at her time of life—well—well—it's all over now. Everything possible was done for her. There's more in Sir Cupper than I was at one time inclined to think. Let me see. Where do I call now." (He consulted a note-book.) "Ah! yes; I can take it on my road to St. Lazarus. Hobson!" (to the coachman) "Bow Street — the police-office. It's time I said something to my friends there about this man Pratt. He's no business to be at large, and he can be up to no good. In fact, I happen to know that he's up to a great deal of harm."

The death of Mrs. Carr was duly chronicled in the first column of *The Times*.

The marriage of Lord Southernwood and Miss Carr was, of course, postponed for many months. Mr. Carr and his daughter, after the funeral, left town again, and lived in strict retirement at Croxall Chase.

"Awful sell for Cupid, the affair being put off," the fellows at the Junior Adonis agreed.

It was dull enough now in the neighbourhood of Oakmere; the hand of affliction pressing heavily

upon the inmates of Croxall; the Court shut up, with rather a doubt prevailing as to whom it belonged. The fine old house—square, with two wings projecting beyond the centre, red brick, with stone coigns and window-cases, and a sculptured open parapet, concealing the roof, from which rise the octagon columnal chimneys—the old house had been stripped of its furniture. There was a drift of leaves disfiguring the roads and paths; the lawns were neglected; moss and weeds spotted and blotched the gravel walks. There were no lights in the windows now; the shutters were closed. Some of the panes of glass had been broken—but who was to pay for mending them? The pleasant clatter of horses' hoofs was no longer to be heard in the stable-yard, round the paving-stones of which rank fringes of grass were growing. No sound of human voice, no, nor bark of dog, greeted the ear now; all was deserted, dreary, wretched. In a short time the neighbourhood would be giving the place the credit of being haunted—of being possessed by ghostly visitants from another world. It was already said to be in Chancery: which was a step in the supernatural direction. Young Mr. Page, it was freely, though sorrowfully, stated, was a ruined man. And the Lomaxes had given the

place up; but then nobody regretted that fact much.

A very worthy gentleman had succeeded the Rev. Purton Wood. That was the only grain of comfort to be discovered around the general dismalness of the state of things in Oakmere.

And Arnold, where was he?

He had obtained his certificate from the Commissioner in Bankruptcy. He had determined to quit England for ever, and had written a letter to Janet Gill, asking her to go with him as his wife.

CHAPTER IX.

A CATASTROPHE.

Monsieur Anatole, with a stealthy glance over his shoulder—it had become, with him, an habitual action to look round him suspiciously, as though he expected to find himself watched or followed—and as noiselessly as he could—there was always a cat-like quiet about his movements—inserted a shiny latch-key in the door of the house over the water, admitted himself, and passed upstairs to the front room of the first floor.

A half scream of surprise greeted him, a noisy start, a volley of oaths.

"How you frighten a fellow," cried Captain Gill, angrily; "creeping in like a ghost or a thief. I wish you wouldn't, mounseer. You don't know how it knocks me over. Sets my heart beating, quick and noisy, like an undertaker's hammer!"

"Indeed! like an undertaker's hammer?" repeated Monsieur Anatole, as, with a leering grin, he surveyed his friend.

The captain was wiping his forehead with a ragged silk handkerchief, his hands trembling violently; his eyes glistening, bloodshot, and strangely restless. He was only half dressed; had a beard three or four days old on his chin; his collar and shirt buttons were unfastened, and his thick bull-neck and huge chest were bare and exposed. Perhaps he had torn them open to breathe the better; he was panting noisily, like an asthmatic person. Presently he began shivering; rubbing his hands together, but with a fidgety, uncertain motion, as though his muscular action was not thoroughly under control, gazing round him as though with an inane terror of something or somebody.

"I wish to heaven you'd take me out of this place," he said at last, in a feeble, scared tone of voice; "you don't know how it gives me the horrors. It oughtn't to be allowed. Millions of creeping things, all about, on the floors, on the walls. Yes"—he looked up and shuddered—"and on the ceiling too. By George, they come dropping down on a fellow like rain." He got up and changed his seat. "Insects are bad enough; but when you come to reptiles, when you get on at last to devils, who can stand it? How they writhe,

and wriggle, and glide, and slide about. Whichever way you turn you find one of them, and so d—d near to you." He started up with a wild scream.

"By George! I wouldn't sit where you are sitting, not for any money. You've got into the very worst place in the room. They're so thick on that sofa, you couldn't put a pin down without sticking it into one of them. How they twist about, and wink, and grin, showing their infernal sharp teeth and forked tongues."

"Nonsense! nonsense!" said Monsieur Anatole, taking a pinch of snuff.

"Why don't you take me somewhere else. I can't stand it; I can't, indeed. This isn't a fit lodging for an officer and a gentleman. Where's the doctor? He promised me I shouldn't stay here. Where is he?"

"I don't think we shall be troubled much more with the doctor." And Monsieur Anatole smiled significantly.

"By the way,—what was it?" And the captain rubbed his head, and seemed trying to recollect. "I had something to tell you about the doctor; though I can't think what it was. Dear me! what was the doctor's name? I never

could quite make out. He was always rather shy about his name. Luce, wasn't it? Though sometimes it seemed to be something else. I met him first of all at a dram-shop—though I forget where—at some sea-port place, soon after I came back from India through the continent with Janet. Ah! I wonder what's become of Janet. You were to have married her: but the thing never came off, somehow; and then she bolted. Perhaps she's dead. Who knows? But the doctor; what was it about the doctor? I played cards with him, I know, and I lost. I was always so doosid unlucky at cards, as you well know,—at least, you ought to. You've had a good lot of my money altogether; all of it, I might say. Let me see. Ah! I remember. You keep out of the way of the doctor: that was what I wanted to tell you. By George! he is in a way about you—quite raving. I couldn't help laughing. He said he'd wring your ugly old French head off. That was like him, wasn't it? And I think he'd do it, too! He's a desperate sort of chap, is the doctor. He said you'd robbed him, tricked him, blown upon him; that was what he said."

"He's an imbecile!"

But Monsieur Anatole seemed a little moved

by what he had heard. Perhaps he was of those natures which are morally courageous and physically timid. Anyhow, it was not pleasant to learn that the doctor meditated violence; especially as it was tolerably well known that, if possible, he was a man who would, in such a case, act up to his word.

"I'd advise you to keep out of his way. I think a blow from that fellow's great fist would pretty well kill a man. *Have* you cheated him? There was always something up between you two fellows. I never could make it out. Some dodge for raising the wind somehow; by insurance on my life. I know it was precious little I ever got by it; though you gave me a good deal of trouble, and cut me off my grog, and patched me up to go before the doctors."

He laughed noisily.

"You're better," said Monsieur Anatole.

"No, I'm horrid bad; especially at night. I can't sleep a wink. Who could, I should like to know, with all those infernal snakes and things crawling about a fellow? I should like a screw-up of something, but there isn't a drop in the house; and I've no money to send out for anything; and they've stopped my tick at all the publics about here."

"Try that," and Monsieur Anatole produced a full-sized black bottle from the tail pocket of his old-fashioned dress-coat.

The captain snatched at the bottle, uncorked it, and drank from it, though there were glasses upon the mantelpiece within reach of his arm.

"And strong, too, by George!"

He was seized with a fit of coughing.

"Yes, it's strong," Monsieur Anatole remarked, and he walked to the window. He stood there for some time, apparently lost in thought, contemplating abstractedly the passing incidents in the street. Then he turned for a moment, and his eyes were fixed on the bottle, wandering afterwards to the captain, and then from him back again to the bottle. Presently he turned his back again upon his friend, and he took a pinch of snuff as he again looked from the window. A group of children, rather ragged, and not very clean, pale and thin, yet not unhealthy-looking, with gleaming round eyes and profuse hair—the peculiar properties of street infancy—were surrounding a large, battered, headless, wooden toy-horse, upon which,—amidst much noise and laughter, and wrangling, and crying, and merriment, with occasional accidents, bruised foreheads

and grazed legs, and the variety of emotions usual under such circumstances,—they were alternately enjoying rides. For a little while the Frenchman watched the game, unable to restrain his interest or his amusement at certain of the serio-comic features of the proceeding. Then he broke off into a low muttering.

"It's a smaller stake than I had thought to play for. But the game grows a little dangerous. Perhaps it would be as well to rise from the table while I can rise a winner. I had hoped to make a far grander *coup* — to have come off with a fortune, and retired from business for ever; affluent, happy, with *la chère petite* as my wife. It was a folly taking that man Pratt into the affair. A good cat's-paw; but I trusted him, I yielded to him too much: it is owing to him that these other companies have refused the insurance; it is due to his mismanagement that suspicion has been roused; and—and I have found it necessary to take steps for his removal,"—he smiled grimly—"to give his old friends of the police information concerning him; he will trouble me no more." He consulted his watch. "By this time I think he must be secured. Well! shall I rise from the table? Are not the chances a little against me

if I remain?" He contemplated his friend for a moment. "No, I can do nothing further with him: it is too late. No office would look at him now—not even the most greedy for business, the most anxious to swell the number of their policies. There is only the Ostrich Insurance then. But the amount will be wholly mine; there is no longer the imbecile Pratt to cry for a division with me. I can prove; if need be, an interest in the life of the deceased. He is my debtor; I possess overdue bills of his. All is *en règle*. The premiums just due, have been paid, thanks to Madame Desprès and to *la chère petite*. It was a trick, but it was necessary to obtain money from her. And it is, after all, but antedating the departure of her excellent father, the brave captain, by a very little. The question remains: Shall I take this money now, or shall I wait? No, I will not wait. The man Pratt may talk, may try to do me a mischief; it is probable—it is even natural."

He turned round to glance once more at the captain, who had remained speechless at the table. Then he resumed his hat and slowly went out.

"Decidedly, I will let things take their course."

The captain watched the departure of Mon-

sieur Anatole with a strange expression of cunning and interest, listening to his footsteps as he passed downstairs, to the noise of the street-door closing, hastening to the window to make sure that he was really walking down the street. Then the captain burst into a shriek of wild laughter, peal after peal, noisy, shrill, insane.

"Mounseer has forgotten the brandy!" he said. And he raised the bottle to his lips.

There was quite a gay smile upon the Frenchman's puckered old face, a jaunty strut in his walk, as, with an approving glance at his small neat feet, and a heedfulness that no speck of mud should mar the lustre of his boots, he left the Lambeth side of the river, crossed one of the bridges, and soon found himself in the Strand.

"It's a lovely afternoon," he said. "I will promenade myself into the park, or I will sit in the sun and watch the sky, and the water, and the birds, and the little English children with their nursemaids."

Further for his amusement, and in case the other resources should fail him, he purchased a cheap evening newspaper, which he folded into a small compass and thrust into his pocket.

It was pleasant and sunny, as the Frenchman

slowly sauntered along the brink of the ornamental water in St. James's Park. He was in no hurry, was not pressed for time: he seemed a thorough idler, with very little on his mind. Small matters arrested, even absorbed, his attention. He slowly took out his tortoiseshell-rimmed eye-glasses, polishing them with his handkerchief, and read with deliberation the notice at the park entrance as to the hours of opening and closing the gates; the enjoinment upon visitors to protect the water-fowl, and the list of persons who had recently been found guilty of sleeping in the park, cutting the seats, injuring the shrubs, and other misdemeanors, with the dates of their convictions and the punishments awarded them by the magistrates. He noted a slight difference in time between the clocks of the Horse Guards and of the tower of the Houses of Parliament; he studied with manifest admiration the twin towers of the Abbey, their beautiful gothic tracery, now lit up by the flush of the sunset; he was particular in his selection of a seat; he was attracted by the extreme tameness of a cluster of parti-coloured ducks, and watched them feeding from the hands of a family of children in short-flounced full-skirted dresses; he felt in his pockets, and dis-

covered some crumbs, with which, in his turn, he began to feed the birds, and amuse himself. It was thus he was reminded of his newspaper, which he had almost forgotten. He took it out, resumed his seat, and commenced very leisurely to unfold it and scan its contents.

Certainly he was in no hurry; although it was now an hour and more since he had quitted his lodgings and his friend, the captain. He was not greatly interested in his newspaper, neither: he often looked up from it as some one passed in front of the seat on which he was sitting, as a boat glided away upon the water, as the water-fowl's unmusical clamours struck upon his ear. He turned lazily from column to column, from page to page: decidedly a very desultory reader.

At length something caught his eye as he was turning over the paper; something important, as it seemed. He quite started: he uttered a cry of surprise; he snatched at the paper, tearing it in his eagerness to get at a particular part of it, midway in one of the columns. He had missed it in glancing down that column before. A very short paragraph, headed with the words "This Day;" and underneath, in capital letters, "The Ostrich Insurance Company."

He turned pale as he read; he trembled; he gasped for breath; his eyes grew dim; the letters danced before him; he was obliged to wait for a few moments to try and regain his composure, to obtain command over his shaking hands. No wonder he could not read, with the paper jogging up and down in front of him like that. He removed his hat to wipe his wet forehead, disturbing his wig recklessly in the process. Again he took up the paper, struggling to master its few brief sentences on the subject of the Ostrich Insurance Company.

The paragraph set forth that for the past day or two, although for obvious reasons, there had been forbearance in giving them publicity, there had been sinister rumours in the city seriously affecting the insurance company, and the character and proceedings of its officials; that now the worst suspicions had been confirmed. The offices of the company were closed, though they had been surrounded all the morning by an angry crowd of claimants, creditors, and insurers. That the greatest excitement prevailed; that the company was said to be hopelessly insolvent, while it was believed that an investigation into its affairs would disclose a series of the most nefarious and disgraceful proceedings on the part of the directors. It was feared (the

newspaper went on to state) that another instance would be disclosed of gross imposture and fraud on the part of a public company. When would the public be warned? &c. &c. Here was another case, &c. &c. It was but the other day, &c. &c., ending with a neat reference to a certain celebrated Silver Mining Company. The managing director and the secretary were alleged to have absconded, taking with them the books of the company, and all the available assets. Of course, steps would be immediately taken to ensure their pursuit and arrest. Meanwhile, as was to be seen by reference to another column of the paper, a petition had been presented to the Court of Bankruptcy, for the immediate winding-up of the concern. It was believed that the policies of the company were not worth the paper upon which they were written; and that the more the affair was examined, the more it would be found disastrous to the creditors, and shameful to all concerned. The office had been conducted on what was known as the mutual system; so that the insurers were, in fact, partners in the undertaking.

Monsieur Anatole was at length able to master and to understand the news contained in the paper he had purchased. He glanced round him wildly;

he crushed the paper into a large creased ball, and crammed it in his pocket; he rose, and set off, walking as rapidly as he could.

"If it should be too late?" He kept on repeating this sentence over and over again. "If it should be too late? If it should be too late?"

He went on mechanically, choosing the shortest way, returning to his lodgings. Now walking quickly, now half running. It did not seem to occur to him—he was too much occupied to think of it—that he might have proceeded much more quickly by taking a cab. "If it should be too late?"

He was panting, trembling with nervous excitement, perhaps, too, from fatigue; as he again produced his latch-key his hand shook so that he made several ineffectual attempts to fit the key in the keyhole. Every minute seemed to him then of an enormous value, and yet there was always something occurring to hinder his progress. He had thought so all the way of his return—troublesome obstacles at every turn. Now he had been unable to cross, owing to a cluster and confusion of vehicles. Now he had been impeded and hustled by an unexpected throng of passengers in the street. Now he had nearly slipped on some

orange-peel. Now he was stumbling over the projecting foot of a sleeping beggar. What new agonies he derived at each of these occurrences! he grew angry, feverish, half mad under them; and over and over again he repeated, and when he was silent some one else took up the cry and dinned it in his ear, in both ears, while the echo of it seemed reverberating all round him: "If it should be too late!"

He mounted the stairs with a strange, undefined sense of alarm; he opened the door of the room on the first-floor. He was too frightened at first to enter. All was silent. He took courage, though even yet he was afraid to look round him; he entered the room with some dim consciousness that in another moment his wandering eyes would alight on some frightful object, something terrible. Was he alone in the room?

No; in another moment he heard a rustling behind him, a frantic cry, a peal of horrid laughter; then a hand upon his shoulder, a grip upon his neck, and he was struggling for his life with a half naked madman—his friend Captain Gill.

He would have been flung down at once, by the force and impetus of the attack, but for the table.

It saved him from falling, though its sharp edge came with painful violence against the small of his back, and his head, thrust suddenly down, struck smartly upon the hard, polished surface. Then a jerk, an effort; he raised himself for a moment; the table, pushed by this action, rode away upon its castors, and the two men, rolling down together, fell with a heavy thump. Each had as close a grasp of the other as he could secure, but the Frenchman was underneath; he had been taken at a disadvantage, in point of strength he was terribly overmatched, and for the first moment or two he was nearly paralyzed by the paroxysm of alarm under which he was labouring. He began to perceive, however, that he was engaged in a deadly wrestle with a man who was deaf to all cries for mercy, who was mad, whom it was necessary to oppose with all the force he could summon. He gave one scream for help, it was echoed by a mocking yell from the madman, and then with something of the courage and strength of despair he nerved himself for the encounter. So they rolled, and tossed, and struggled upon the floor,—panting, growling, tearing, snarling, struggling: it was more like a fight between two wild animals than between human beings. Monsieur

Anatole felt that he was mastered by his terrible foe, yet still he struggled on in hopes that assistance might arrive and the tide of battle be turned in his favour. But his strength was leaving him; he grew more and more faint. If he had ever felt any doubts about his age they must have been effectually cleared away at that moment. He was a poor infirm old man. Another cry for help died away in his parched throat. The madman's hand was twisted in his cravat, draggling it painfully tight; he could feel the sharp knuckles driving into his neck; already his mouth opened, his face was distorted, his eyes were starting from his head in the agonies of strangulation. He felt his head raised repeatedly by the madman's hold upon his neckerchief and then struck violently upon the floor. The pain was acute, he felt half stunned, the room seemed to swim round, and fiery stars to dance before his eyes. He roused himself for a final effort. He had fixed both his hands in his foe's thick crumpled matted hair; his fingers were tightly wreathed in it. He tore at it violently, and then released one hand to dash it with all his force in the captain's face. Pained, blinded, he loosened his grasp of the Frenchman's neck: Monsieur Anatole moved, endeavouring to rise; he felt the

hot, noisome breath of the madman beating upon his face. Another moment and he was free! his foe was shaking upon the floor, shrieking with hysterical laughter, holding in his hand the dense, black, curl-clustered wig of the Frenchman.

He was off instantly, staggering to the door, passing a shivering huddle of people on the landing who had been afraid to enter the room, although roused by the noise of the struggle,—half flinging himself down the stairs, hurrying out into the street. Pale, livid, trembling, panting for breath, his clothes torn and twisted, and his head bare, how old he looked now! how more than ever skull-like his face! There was not a hair to be seen upon that yellow, shining crown, terribly red and bruised and battered in places where it had come in contact with the floor and the table. A very old, half-crazed, terror-stricken man, running down the street as fast as he possibly could, with a tail of amazed children crying, screaming, jeering after him. How weak he was! He fell down more than once, to stagger up again more stunned and shaken, and hurry on. At last, feeling his limbs give way under him, he staggered into a cab, but he could not speak. In vain the driver sought to question him as to the direc-

tion in which he would be driven; he could give no answer; could only wave one hand in a scared, half-mad way, which seemed to urge nothing so much as immediate movement. The cabman drove off at length, at a rapid pace, in the direction of the Middlesex side of the river.

Monsieur Anatole needed not to have been in such a hurry, in such dire apprehension. In the street he had quitted a crowd now stood round an object in the gutter; a half-naked creature, bleeding, shattered, muddy, lifeless. With a madman's sagacity and cleverness, the captain had discovered the quickest way of reaching his runaway foe. He had heard the Frenchman's footsteps in the street, and had hurled himself against the window, cutting himself frightfully with the broken glass, and falling, with awful force, upon the pavement below.

It was some hours later in the evening. Many guests circled the little marble tables of the *Café de l'Univers*. Madame Desprès was still the gorgeous ornament of the *comptoir*. Louis was occupied as ever with his colossal coffee and milk pots. There were many *habitués* there, and a sprinkling of strangers. The musical clock inter-

rupted now and then the buzz of conversation, accentuated, as it were, by the occasional click of the billiard balls, or the rattle of dominoes. Mr. Lackington made furtive sketches of picturesque *emigrés*. Tom Norris was loud as usual in his advocacy of French art. Timson was still unable to demonstrate that his profession was in the slightest degree remunerative. Phil Gossett still meditated dosing the foreigner freely with blue-pill; and Binns, who had joined the assemblies at the *café*, introduced by Jack Lackington, had made two or three attempts to relate yet once again the story of his adventures on Monte Rosa.

"How often, Lackington, are you going to sketch that Frenchman with the bald head and the ragged beard?" asked Tom Norris.

"Hush!" cried Binns. "Here's another bald head!" They looked up.

"Títhonus!" they whispered to each other, in a puzzled sort of way.

A cab had stopped at the door of the *café*. Monsieur Anatole had been driving about a considerable time, as it seemed. At last he had collected his scattered senses, and given a coherent order to the cabman. He poured an uncounted heap of silver into the man's hand, and tottered

from the cab into the coffee-room. There was a general movement of amazement at the strange sight he presented. Madame rose from her seat. Louis put down his pots and rushed forward, as though to render assistance.

Certainly there was something strange, weird, alarming about this little old man, with his corpse-like face, his bald bare head, his fixed glazed eyes, his parted lips, his dazed, frightened, insane expression. He shuffled as he walked, dragging his limbs painfully after him, making but slow progress. Louis, serene again in a moment, turned to polish the guest's accustomed table, to dust his usual chair.

Suddenly a man rose from a seat at the side of the room and confronted Monsieur Anatole. The Frenchman stopped; had some difficulty in recognizing the person who hindered his advance. A heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder: the coarse, black, nervous hand of a tall, shabby-looking, burly, swarthy man——Pratt, "the doctor."

Monsieur Anatole shivered, ejaculated a strange guttural sound, more like the croak of a reptile, or the hoarse cry of a bird of prey, than a human utterance, staggered, threw up his arms, and fell

back heavily. There was an immediate rush towards him.

"Give way," cried the rich deep voice of Mr. Gossett. "I'm a medical man. Stand back, open the door. Give us all the air you can."

He ripped up the buttons of the Frenchman's coat, tore away the ligatures from his neck. There was a froth upon his lips, and a stain of black blood. The medical student felt his pulse, listened at his heart, prepared to open a vein in his arm; sprinkled water in the livid, twisted, wrinkled face. Madame Desprès was on her knees (in a calm, graceful, attitude,—Tom Norris found time to note and admire it, even at such a moment—but he was always an artist!) rendering all the assistance in her power. Louis had brought cushions, water, cognac; kept back the crowd; was ceaseless in his attentions.

"It's no use," said Mr. Gossett, as he wiped his lancet; "it's all over."

There was a slight struggle in the crowd, the noise of a scuffle, then a peculiar clicking sound. Some persons from the street had joined the group in the *café* round the body of Monsieur Anatole.

"You're our prisoner, Mr. Pratt; no mistake about it. It's too late to resist." The doctor had

been skilfully handcuffed almost before he was aware of it. His attention had been absorbed by the spectacle before him. He was in the custody of three police officers. He permitted himself to be taken from the *café*, and sitting in a cab—it was Monsieur Anatole's cab—he was at once removed to the police station.

"We've been after you some days. Returning home without a ticket: and there are other charges. You've managed well to keep out of our way so long."

"I reserve my defence," he said, with an oath and a coarse laugh. "There would, perhaps, have been a worse charge against me if that Frenchman had lived five minutes longer. The coward! Why, he was killed by the very look of me."

"And you call this a land of liberty!" cried Tom Norris, with an air of contempt. "A man arrested in a public coffee-room; never saw such a thing in Paris."

"By the by," said Binns, "I think I know that man they took away."

"Tell us about him. Who was he?"

"Stop," interrupted Jack Lackington. "You didn't meet him on Monte Rosa?"

"No; in the City."

"All right. Go on."

"I haven't much to say. It's only this. He was pointed out to me the other day as connected with that Insurance Company that's just smashed up—the Ostrich. He 'made inquiries' for them, as it's called; a sort of secret agent. If any one applied to insure or to borrow, that man was set to work to find out what he could concerning the applicant. It's done by many offices."

"He was a kind of private spy—that was his profession?"

Binns admitted that such was his belief.

"And there are spies, then, in this land of liberty?" cried Tom Norris. "What an infamy! There are no spies in Paris."

The Frenchman with the bald head, Mr. Lackington's model, was bending over the body of Monsieur Anatole. The Frenchman was Gaspard.

"Yes; he is quite dead," he said, contemplating the corpse. "Perhaps it is as well; perhaps it has saved trouble to us others. He has permitted too much his private pursuits to interfere with his public duties. He has been warned more than once on that subject, and I had received some

instructions concerning him. He commenced to weary the authorities."

"What authorities, monsieur?" inquired Jack Lackington.

Gaspard contemplated his questioner for a moment, and then, in a theatrical attitude, with a sham devotional air, he pointed upwards.

"He'd paint very well in that *pose*," muttered Mr. Lackington. "I wish he'd give me a sitting."

"Ah!" cried Gaspard, after a moment's pause, feeling in the pockets of the deceased; "where, then, is his snuff-box? his pocket-book?"

The body had been removed, to await an inquest. The last guest had departed. The *Café de l'Univers* was closed for the evening.

Louis approached the *dame de comptoir*. He was very angry; his sharp white teeth could be seen grinding together, his eyes rolled beneath his scowling, depressed, black brows.

"You are an imbecile, Hortense," he said savagely. "You have permitted yourself to be tricked—fooled." He held up before her Monsieur Anatole's pocket-book.

"Pardon me, my friend," she whined humbly; "I did it always for the best. What is it, then?

Was he not then rich, this Anatole? was he not a successful enterpriser—a great financier—rich—a millionnaire? Why do you frown upon me, my Louis, my friend?"

"He was a cheat, a chevalier of industry, a thief, a coward, a beast! I have gathered all from Monsieur Gaspard. He was a *mouchard*, a robber, a brigand; and he was poor, truly a beggar! He was without a *sou*. He has given you worthless papers in exchange for your good gold! For his pocket-book! It is full of trash—of rubbish. Thus I finish it."

And he thrust it into the stove used for heating the coffee.

"Have pity, have mercy, *my husband!*" cried Madame Desprès, in a voice of agony.

"Bah!" And he thrust her from him with brutal violence. She sobbed noisily. But his anger was not mollified by her tears.

"And for all we have lost, for all we have surrendered, we have but this to show! How cruel! It is pretty, but it is not gold!" and Louis took snuff from Monsieur Anatole's silver-gilt box.

CHAPTER X.

THE "KANGAROO," A 1,—FOR PORT PHILIP.

Some months have passed. The weather is beginning to grow cold, autumn is gradually yielding to winter. The summer decorations of cut paper, artificial flowers, and willow shavings, are being removed from the grates, and people are coming round again to the opinion that, after all, the best "ornament for your fire-stoves" is comprehended in a heap of blazing coals. Certainly a very ruddy fire lights up the rather gloomy, shabby old room occupied by Mr. Hugh Wood in the Temple. I think bachelors are generally the first to begin fires; they are very cheap comforts, and they are so conveniently and pleasantly associated with hot tumblers and boiling kettles, warm, cosy conversations, feet on hob or fender, pipe in mouth, celibate joys, which, of course, Benedict abandons when matrimony condemns him to a bright poker and

a footman to smother the fire with a downpour of fuel.

And in the glow of the fire you forget the gloom of the place. Otherwise, Mr. Wood's chambers are not particularly cheerful or comfortable—a rambling, ramshackled, low-ceilinged set, with many odd-shaped rooms, and great black cupboards, and uneven floors and creaking boards; much dust, very little clean paint or whitewash, and abundant cobwebs; situate in a grimy court, ill paved, ill lighted. But Mr. Wood was not a Temple dandy—(there are such things). The chambers were cheap; in fact, he had for his money even more room than he wanted. It was for that reason, perhaps, he sub-let part of his premises. When Mrs. Lomax gave up her town residence, and proceeded to join her husband on the continent, her brother, Mr. Arnold Page, was very glad to become the tenant of his friend, Hugh Wood. The rooms were now occupied by these gentlemen jointly, and their names are duly inscribed over the door.

The reader will remember that Arnold Page had been called to the bar prior to the date of his first appearance in this chronicle. He had been endeavouring to avail himself of such of his

professional emoluments as were to be obtained; he always spoke in grateful terms of the kindness and assistance he received at this period of his career at the hands of Hugh Wood. But it is necessary to state that his success had not been very considerable.

Clearly the man who has attained maturity without ever having earned a guinea has no light task before him when necessity compels him to begin to toil for his bread. Perhaps Arnold had very much more than average ability; but he had never had occasion to employ it for his own advantage. Speed and mettle are of no great avail to a horse that is never to run a race; never to be taken from grazing on pleasant pastures for nobler work. He had talent, undoubtedly; he had the capacity for success as a toiler—but he had never toiled; he was born to good luck, as every one had at one time declared—born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Page, of Oakmere, with an income of some thousands, of a county family, the son of General Page of Waterloo fame—this was all over now. And he had to follow a profession he had taken up in the first instance without seriousness, quite capriciously. At all times there seems to be a wide chasm between the cleverness

of the amateur and the skilled labour of the regular workman; perhaps because the latter has been investing his life in the business, while the former has been merely risking his leisure. It is very difficult to raise money on dilettanteism: and the rate of discount is alarming. Commerce will have its bond, insists on full legal measure. Drawing-room triumphs pale and dwindle exposed to the more searching criticism of a wider and colder arena. Arnold had great taste and judgment, and accomplishments, considered as one who comes into the market as a buyer; but when he sought to set up his stall as a seller, the case seemed different, somehow. He could draw and paint; his ability for art was even remarkable; but he had never served the necessary apprenticeship, he had not undergone that novitiate of study and toil, which alone could give real worth to his productions, and these were with all their cleverness incomplete; promising in one who had the power to advance beyond the point where promise ceases and actual performance begins: but this he had not. He was skilled in music; he had written pleasant trifles in prose and verse; he had even been printed, and for a few things paid. But to live by such means! to gain bread by all

this unfocussed ability! It was a very hard task.

He had secured a stray brief or two; his old solicitors had kindly put some not important draughting business in his way; he had earned money by noting cases in court for certain law reports. Hugh Wood had been of use to him by obtaining introductions of this kind, and had procured the insertion of various papers of Arnold's in a magazine upon which Mr. Wood was himself employed. It is not to be supposed that these evidenced any startling ability. They were, perhaps, simply average articles. Almost every well-educated gentleman with good sense and good taste can, if need be, produce a certain sort of literary work of respectable worth. But Hugh Wood was loud and hearty in his praise and encouragement.

"You'll succeed, old fellow! make no doubt of it. Of course the fight at first is rather hard. I know what that is. I speak from experience. I've had struggle enough for money in my time: no man has been more pinched, I should think."

"I never heard of your difficulties before, Hugh," Arnold said.

"College debts, you know. That sort of thing."

"Nonsense! You were not in an extravagant set."

"Well, anyhow," Hugh continued, evasively, "the difficulties existed; but I've got over them now—that is, nearly," he added in a low voice.

He had received that morning a rather urgent letter from the Venerable Archdeacon: but it had come after a considerable interval of silence.

Arnold was hardly convinced. His progress was necessarily slow; he began to think that his antecedents interfered with his prospects; he reverted often to his old plan of quitting England. At last, rather suddenly, he announced that he had taken a passage in a ship bound for Port Philip, and the day for weighing anchor was now very near at hand.

An advertisement in *The Times* announced that the ship would very shortly depart. "For Port Philip direct, the magnificent, new, river-built, clipper-ship *Kangaroo*, 1,000 tons, A 1, at Lloyd's, loading in the East India Docks, J. Stunsell, commander. This splendid vessel is fitted with all the latest improvements, and presents the best opportunity for the shipment of fine and season goods; will receive goods until the 25th, unless previously filled. Has a spacious and elegant

saloon; her cabins are lofty and airy, and she will carry an experienced surgeon. For terms of freight and passage, apply to Messrs. Black, Ball and Co., Billiter Square, E.C."

Mr. Page had secured a cabin in the *Kangaroo*, and had made many visits to Blackwall concerning it, and had been very busy with his outfit, and made great purchases of literature to be read on the voyage, and was altogether much occupied with his plans. He was subject to great bursts of elation, and high spirits, and hopefulness, concerning his future career, with occasional relapses into deep dejection and fits of regret at quitting England and the friends remaining to him out of the wreck of his property.

Hugh Wood's chambers were filled with half-packed boxes, bags, clothes, all the paraphernalia of a long voyage, and the luggage a man takes with him when he purposes to quit his native land, never to return.

"A few more hours," said Arnold, "and then good-by to England!" He had been assuming of late the regular emigrant tone, charging his country with the misfortunes which were with more reason attributable to himself, born of his own conduct.

"Have you heard anything of *them?*" Hugh asked. There had been, it seemed, a sort of tacit agreement between them that the Carrs should be always referred to as *them.*

"No."

"Do they know of your departure?"

"They may, but not from me. Does it matter now? I wrote to *her* upon the death of the old lady—I had no right to, perhaps—a few lines, merely expressive of sympathy and condolence, poor child."

"You received no answer?"

"Yes; she thanked me simply, kindly. And so that was over."

And he resumed his occupation. He was turning over the contents of a large mahogany desk, committing various letters and papers to the flames: odd and useless documents, bills, and notes relating to long past small events (smaller than ever they seemed to him in his present mood), preserved at the first rather by accident than design. Hugh was sitting at the same table, in front of the fire, smoking, turning over the leaves of a book, now and then glancing at the proceedings of his companion.

By-and-by Arnold came to a letter. He paused

as in doubt whether to burn or to keep. He read it through.

"She was right," he muttered; "she knew my heart better than I did. And yet I thought I loved her wholly, truly. I was not worthy of her. She deserved something better than the poor after-crop of love I proffered her. I don't think happiness could have come of our union. She plainly charges me with misconstruing my own feelings. She was right; and yet I thought she loved me, too. Was it therefore she discovered the false ring about my offer? detected the unsoundness of my heart? God grant that she may be happy. She is a prize well worthy of any man's efforts. Poor Janet! God bless her!" And after a few moments' further musing, he thrust the letter into the fire and watched it consume. Hugh looked from his book and watched it also.

A further tossing of worthless papers into the fire, and then he paused again in his labours. He had arrived at a carefully folded-up packet of letters. He poised them in his hand, but he hesitated; he could not bring himself to destroy them.

"Dear little letters! No, I can't burn these. Why should I? Why should I not keep them

for ever? the sole relics of a love that is lost. Besides" (and he smiled sadly), "they'll take up very little room in my luggage: although they take up so much room in my heart." He contemplated them with a sorrowful fondness, then pressed them to his lips.

The letters were—need it be said?—from Leo. Simple productions enough, very likely; girlish, childish even, certainly not very brilliant or intellectual, but frank and natural, because they were written by one who really loved—who was not pretending, or studiously posing herself as a loving woman, as women will do who don't love, but who wrote trustingly, as she spoke; her words, commonplace enough, yet precious, they came so warm and fresh from her heart. If ever a sentence halted, be sure it was because it was laden heavily with tenderness and affection: and each line was of value, ordinary as it seemed, for she had strung upon it such jewels of love: converting, as it were, mere twine into a glorious necklace of pearls.

He could not burn them. He shrank from the very idea of such a thing now; and for greater security he pressed the letters to his heart. And by-and-by he was brushing his eyes with the back

of his hand, as though his vision was somehow obscured by tears: and presently he leant over his desk, hiding his face in his hands.

"He loves her still," muttered Hugh Wood, gazing through the smoke of his pipe at his friend, and putting down his book, of which he had not read a line. "He loves her still; and he has been mortifying himself like a martyr of old, as if that ever did anybody any good." He arose. "Don't disturb yourself," he said. "I'm going out for half an hour. It is not late; and I promised to call upon a man in Pump Court." Arnold hardly looked up, and Hugh Wood hurried away.

He did not go to Pump Court, however. He went in a totally opposite direction, quitting the Temple, and turning into the Strand, where he hailed a cab, and drove off.

It was early on the following morning. Hugh Wood had left the chambers immediately after breakfast. Arnold was still busy with preparations for his departure.

"A very few more hours, now," he said; and he began to meditate how his numerous packages were to be conveyed down to the *Kangaroo* at Blackwall.

There was a little clattering tap of the miniature brass knocker on the door of the chambers. He opened it.

"Leo!" he cried, with a start.

She was veiled, was in deep mourning. She did not speak. She put out a small gloved hand; he could feel, as he grasped it, that she was trembling violently. Hardly knowing what he was doing, he closed the door, and led her into the sitting-room. Her eyes rested for a moment on the half-packed trunks, on the untidy helter-skelter of things about the floor, on the table, on the chairs.

"Oh! Arnold!" she said, in a moved, strained voice; "and you were really going without a word—without one good-by. How could you?" He saw that her eyes had filled with tears; the sight set his heart beating terribly; for some moments he could not speak.

"Forgive me, Leo," he said at length. She gave him her hand again, then sank into a chair.

"And you are going immediately?"

"Yes, almost immediately."

And then there was silence for some time. She lifted her veil, and sat watching the fire, trying, as it seemed, to take off her glove, but she did not

give attention enough to the proceedings, or, as it seemed, strength for so small an effort even had left her.

"Going away, and for ever," she said, mournfully, more as though she were speaking to herself than addressing him.

"Yes, Leo, for ever."

"My poor Arnold." And she fairly burst into tears. He advanced towards her, then stopped, and leant against the mantelpiece. She recovered herself after a few moments, and she dried her eyes. Then she stole a glance at Arnold's white sad face, noting with pain the lines of care upon his forehead; how his cheeks were sunken; how hollow his eyes were; how thin he looked; how much he had aged and wanned altogether: he seemed intent upon the ragged rug, upon which he was standing speechless, motionless, before her.

"I have not done wrong, surely I have not done wrong in coming here?" she said suddenly, with a start, her face crimsoning. "You are not sorry to see me, Arnold?"

"No, Leo; how could you think so?"

And then a half smile gleamed across her face, and she remembered that she had been frightening herself all the way down to the Temple with the

dread lest Arnold should address her as "Miss Carr." She had forgotten this when she met him in the doorway; and now the thought returned only to demonstrate to her how foolish, how groundless, had been her alarms. He called her "Leo," simply, as he had done ever since she could remember.

"Sit down, Arnold, let us talk over this matter quietly, let us draw to the fire; a fire begins to get very comfortable this cheerless weather, does it not? sit down by me." And she put her hand into his; there was no glove upon it now, it was warm, and soft, and trembling within his like a little bird; disturbing him greatly. And he began to ponder as to when he had last held that little hand in his. What a long, long time ago it seemed!

"And so you are going to emigrate, to settle in Australia?" she said in calmer tones than she had yet been able to command. "I only heard of it last night."

"Only last night!"

"Late last night. Hugh Wood came on purpose to tell me. I shall always like him for that."

"Ah! I remember now; I know now why he went out. But he did right."

"You are glad now to see me before you go?" she asked, half-doubtful still.

"Yes, indeed, Leo. I think it very, very kind of you. I shall never forget it."

"And yet you would have gone away without seeing me."

"I was wrong, Leo. But I did it for the best. I thought," he went on in a low voice, "I thought the sight of you, the parting with you, would be too painful to bear." She shivered.

"And you think you will get on well in Australia?" she asked, after a short pause.

"I hope so, Leo. I will try with all my might. I shall work very hard to make a name for myself in the new world."

"But you won't forget your friends here at home, Arnold?"

"Have I any?" he asked, with some bitterness. But he repented his question when he perceived how cruelly he had pained her.

"Pardon me, Leo; I may think of you as my friend, may I not?"

"Always, Arnold. Be sure of it. We have been friends for so long, fast friends; we must not stop now, when we are parting, when you are going away for ever, as you say. Don't try to

forget me; promise me you won't, and think of me kindly, Arnold, as one who—who was a good, true friend always. Promise me this."

"I could not forget you, Leo, if I would; and I would not, Leo, believe me. I was wrong to think of going without seeing you, without a parting word. But it was not that I wished to forget you."

"You are not angry with me, not really angry? You have not been?"

"No, indeed not."

"Oh, Arnold, we have been very wrong to let so cruel a division grow up between us. Nothing ought ever to have endangered our—our friendship; misfortune ought not for one moment to have severed us, but only have drawn us the closer together. Who would have believed in the old, old time, that months and months would pass without our meeting; that you were suffering, and I was not by to give you such comfort as in my poor childish way I could; that you were to be quitting England and I to know nothing of it all; that but for a mere accident, I may say, you would have gone away for ever without seeing me, without my telling you once, assuring you, that I could never forget

you; that you would always, always be very, very dear to me, not less in the present and the future than in the past."

He raised her hand tenderly and pressed it very softly against his lips. They were sitting over the fire, gazing into the embers, their chairs very near together.

"Must you go, Arnold?" she asked, in a soft plaintive voice.

"Yes, Leo, I must indeed."

"But you will come back?" He shook his head.

"You will write to me—sometimes—often—to tell me how you prosper?" He hesitated.

"Will it be wise to do so, Leo?" he asked gravely.

"I could not bear to think, Arnold, that you had forgotten me," she said, with a tremulous voice.

"Do not fear, Leo. Besides, these will bear me company; these will constantly remind me of you." He took from his breast the packet of letters. "Though—though, perhaps," he added ruefully, "I ought not to keep them now. I ought to give them back to you." She started as she recognized scraps of her own writing

appearing here and there amongst the folds of the letters, then she smiled kindly and her eyes gleamed as she pressed them back gently upon him.

"Keep them," she said, simply. "I, too, have a packet something like that, which I shall keep for ever."

Arnold breathed quickly. He did not trust himself to speak, or to look at her. He felt the blood mounting to his head, and his sight grew dim. For some time neither spoke, as they sat together over the fire in Hugh Wood's chambers. One of her hands still rested in his. Then he felt the other upon his arm; presently it stole to his shoulder, as she bent her head down and murmured, very tenderly,

"No, Arnold, you must not go; I cannot bear it; it will kill me." He sighed, trembling.

"You must not go—for my sake." He strove to speak, he released her hand.

"Arnold!" she cried, in passionate, swooning tones, "you will not go—promise me you will not go—for I love you. Oh, Arnold, you cannot doubt it."

"Leo," he began hoarsely, pressing his hands upon his forehead; but he felt the room swimming

round him—he rose, leaning upon the table for support; he could not continue.

"You love me?" she said, with painful agitation; "tell me you love me, Arnold?"

"I have loved you, I shall love you always, Leo; but what does it avail! Oh, Leo, it is cruel to try me like this. You know," he cried, hoarsely, "that you are lost to me for ever. That to bid me hope now is only to drive me to a greater despair in the future. If there were nothing else to part us—you are not free—you are to be the wife of Lord Southernwood."

"No, Arnold, it is over, I am free—have pity, Arnold, for I love you so much—forgive me—love me——"

And then she was woven round by Arnold's arms, her tears were dried upon his breast—she was strained against his fiercely beating heart, and he was kissing fondly her forehead, her eyes, her lips.

"Dearest Arnold."

"My own darling little Leo!"

After a little while they grew more composed—more reasonable; though still his arm was round her, still she had very tight hold of his hand.

"But what will be said of me—what will be thought?" Arnold asked.

"Does it matter very much, Arnold, what is said, what is thought? People can only say, dear, that we loved each other very much—a great deal too much for either of us to think of quitting the other. After that,—I don't think we will care much what they add, after that."

"But I am so poor, so very poor, Leo, and you ——"

"You are so proud, you mean, sir," with a mock air of scolding him. "If you are happy, what does it matter how you are made happy? You are not ashamed to owe your happiness to one who loves you as I do? For money, what is that to us—how can it affect our love? If I were poor, should you be changed towards me? if I had been in need, should I not have come to you for aid sooner than any one? Such a thought ought never to have parted us,—and it never shall again."

"You are very generous, darling; you are nobler, kinder, better in every way than I am. You are a little angel, Leo," and here they kissed again. In fact, their observations were quite punctuated with kisses and caresses just at this

period. "But you have not told me. Lord Dolly——"

"I behaved shamefully, cruelly; but what could I do? it was soon after poor mamma's death: some months ago now—she mentioned you quite at the last. That made me very sad and thoughtful,—she was so fond of you, Arnold,—and I felt more and more each day that the marriage must not, could not, take place. And at last, —it was painful to me, because I could see how terribly he suffered—I told him that I could never be his wife—"

"And he?"

"He was very brave—very good, and generous, and noble, as he has always been. He was deeply hurt, but he forgave me, he released me—besought me to do as I thought best; said he valued my happiness far above his own, and many kind, unselfish things. I felt that I loved him more at that moment than I had done at any former period of the engagement. But oh, Arnold, the sense of relief I felt afterwards when I knew that I was not to be his wife—that I was free! I was half mad with joy. It was cruel of me, because poor Lord Dolly was suffering sadly. I shall never forget how sad, crushed, he looked, how

utterly despairing, as he kissed my hand for the last time—said good-by, hoped I shall always be happy, and then hurried from me; I could hear him sobbing as he went away."

"Poor Lord Dolly!"

"I loved you very much, or I could never have been so cruel, Arnold. Still I did not know what to do. I did not dare to write to you; I hardly know why now, but I was afraid; I thought perhaps you had ceased to care for me—to think of me!"

"Leo!"

"And I could learn so little of you, until last night, and then I determined to come here; and when I found that you had kept my poor little letters—that you loved me still a little——"

The sentence was interrupted; she was pressed so closely against his heart that further speech was hardly possible.

"And you didn't love Janet Gill, then? only a very little?" she whispered, with saucy slyness.

Arnold's cheeks flushed as he replied,—

"Not more than you loved Lord Dolly! And —pity me! I knew not what I did. I thought you were lost to me." Then again,—

"Dear Arnold!"

"Darling little Leo!"

"And papa?" he asked, presently.

"He's waiting for me now. He came down here with me; but he said he thought the stairs would be rather too much for him, and that I'd better go alone—what an old darling he is!—so he's in the carriage, in Temple Lane, isn't it called? I'm afraid," she added, with a charming blush, "he'll think I've kept him waiting a very long time; perhaps we had better go to him at once."

Old Mr. Carr looked from one to the other of them, with sly kindly glances. He shook hands warmly with Arnold.

"You've been a long time, Leo, persuading Arnold to come down and see me. I suppose you've been studying law in the barrister's chambers: the Marriage Act, perhaps: I thought you were never coming, and I've been wanting my lunch terribly. Jump in and lunch with us, Arnold, and dine too. I don't suppose Leo will let you go in a hurry again. There's been no peace in the house of late, entirely on your account, I can tell you. Home, Andrews."

It was after dinner, when they were over their wine, that the old gentleman said to Arnold,—

"So you *would* do all you could to shield that Whitehall scamp!"

"He was my sister's husband," said Arnold. "For her sake, for the children's—"

"You were obstinate: you paid a heavy price. Well, well, you take after your father. The general was obstinate; he knew how to stand to his guns, as the foe found at Waterloo. However, things have turned out better than might have been expected. You will not lose Oakmere."

"It is already lost," said Arnold, with a sigh.

"Not quite. I stand in the shoes—so far only as Oakmere is concerned, thank heaven!—of the Ostrich Insurance Company. When you come to look at the terms of Leo's marriage settlement, you will find that in marrying that young lady you will reinstate yourself pretty much in your old position, as the proprietor of Oakmere, in right of your wife."

"Oh, Mr. Carr! this is too generous."

"Stop. There are certain conditions to precede that arrangement. I think I must follow Laban's example, and ask Jacob to serve for Rachel. We've had enough of playing with business: but you can begin to work really, if you will. I've still an interest in the iron foundry—a partner's

share. We can make room for you, I think, in the counting-house, and, perhaps, by-and-by, we can slip you into the firm—there's nothing but a clear head wanted. The business has produced nothing but honest men, hitherto; though I say it. There will be no reason why it should do anything else while you are in it. The partners grow old. There will be plenty to do; but you'll soon find yourself at home with the work. It's better than being a director of a sham company. But we won't say anything more about that—that's all past; you've been in the fire and you come out tempered, not destroyed. Your father wasn't ashamed of having an iron-founder for his friend; you won't be ashamed of being one yourself, or of marrying the daughter of one, especially when she restores you such a property as Oakmere, and adds to it such another as Croxall. No more business to-night: not a word. Pass the claret. We'll drink her health. I can tell you that our friends, Holroyd and Hopegood, will have great pleasure in preparing the settlements on the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Page. The names will look well in gold letters on a tin-box in their office. And now we'll go into the drawing-room, and ask Leo to play us

a tune; she'll be very angry with me for keeping you from her all this time. One more glass; you're a little pale and shaky still; but I think you're going on very well now."

Certainly he was a lucky dog! Clearly he must have been born with a silver spoon in his mouth!

Hugh Wood returned to the chambers in the Temple.

"Gone! And left no trace? Yes; this," and he took up a lady's kid glove, and contemplated it curiously, as though he took much interest in the manner of stitching used in the manufacture of gloves. "I think I have lost a tenant," he said, after some time; "and I think the *Kangaroo*, A 1, for Port Philip, has lost a passenger. It's my doing," he sighed heavily. "I little thought at one time that I should contribute so much to the union of Arnold Page and Leonora Carr. However, if I have made two persons very happy indeed, it will be a rather pleasant reflection for some time to come. And I think Arnold deserved to be happy; he's a good fellow, let who will speak against him. He has taken fortune's buffets and rewards with equal thanks—or very nearly

so. For her—— no; I won't trust myself on that subject, except to say, God bless her! may she be happy." And he lighted his pipe. "I have done enough work for to-day; and I've something to think about."

The *Kangaroo*, A 1, for Port Philip, in due course weighed anchor; but Mr. Arnold Page had forfeited his passage.

POSTSCRIPT.

WHEN the green baize curtain has descended on the closing scene of the Christmas piece, and the *dramatis personæ*, illumined by red fire, have been all safely landed in the Bower of Golden Artichokes, amid the Fairy Realms of Perpetual Whirligigs; after there has wholly vanished from the keen vision of the pit that admirable, final group, properly pyramidic in composition, and presumed to represent the domestic comfort and normal manner of life of the pantomime family on the cessation of their theatrical toils; when the columbine mounts on the shoulders of her spangled lover, who, with widely-extended legs, finds precarious footing on the respective hips of the clown and pantaloon, themselves fixed in attitudes of no inconsiderable violence; the while the leanest of sprites literally makes no bones about twisting himself into any pose conceivable

by the most fanciful artist in human arabesque, and performs in the foreground the gyrations of an incarnate catharine-wheel—after all this, there is yet one more drop added to the brimmed-up cup of pleasure presented to the lips of the holiday folks; they are yet called upon to recognize with mirthful applause one little supplemental proceeding on the part of a chief performer. The clown protrudes his comic face between the curtain and the proscenium, with a cry of "Good-night! Come again to-morrow!" He succeeds in blowing up the expiring flame of laughter into one final flicker. Bless the honest smooth-faced schoolboys, who echo aloud the jester's parting good wishes; who have yet left in their aching, rotund bodies a genuine crow of sturdy mirth, and who give it freely, heartily. But then the clown is always thoroughly *en rapport* with the schoolboy.

Very much after the manner of the Jack Pudding of the pantomime, the novelist, it would seem, is prescriptively expected to reappear after the drop has fallen upon his concluding *tableau*, to utter yet more last words; to afford further information touching his characters; their fates and futures: to bid his readers, one and all, "good-night,"—albeit, the prime events being ascertained

and settled, and the heroine comfortably deposited at last in the arms of the hero, he can hope to kindle but slight interest by any addenda he may chose to tack on to his chronicle. But in this we perceive one of the conditions distinguishing narrative fiction from the methods of the high walks of the drama. Who presumes to express interest in the background figures of the tragedy? Who would dare to summon the author of *Hamlet* to give us detailed histories of his minor personages? "Take up the bodies," says Fortinbras. "Go, bid the soldiers shoot!" And so, a dead march; a bearing off of the corpses; a peal of ordnance shot off—and an end. We may know no more. What became of Horatio? Did he marry the player-lady, who had increased in stature by the altitude of a chopine? In what manner did Osric conduct himself in his after life? Were his last days anything like Brummell's? Did those twin snobs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern fall out prior to their execution, or manifest any change in that surprising unanimity which distinguished them during the play? Did the actors recover from the disastrous failure of their performance at Elsinore? Did the second clown improve at all in the guessing of riddles? These

things, had the poet been a novelist, he would have been bound to inform us. As it is, we are compelled to go without the information. Certain ladies and gentlemen, I hear, have held spirit-rapping conversations with the immortal bard, and received important communications from him; but I never could find out that these had reference to any of the important subjects I have suggested. I only know that my very dear William has never manifested himself at my dining-table (though there has always been a knife and fork laid for him), and in regard to any curiosity I may have entertained on the above and kindred topics arising out of his works,—his opinion as to his commentators, for instance,—it seems to me that he has cared,—well—not a rap!

These preparatory observations being submitted to the calm consideration of the reader, I proceed to register a few notes concerning certain of the persons and incidents in this book. It cannot be, however, that I should definitely close the history of each of my characters seriatim. The events narrated have happened in our own day; no very long time back. Nearly all of our friends are still living; and while there is life, there is likely to be vicissitude. I have not the means to provide

fortunes for them all, or to remove them beyond the possibility of future attacks of adversity. The wolf may be driven from the door, and driven a great distance off, but it is hard to say, for all that, that he will never, by any chance, find his way back again.

The *Café de l'Univers* has closed its doors, and Madame Desprès and her husband Louis the waiter, have disappeared. It is not known whether the motives of their departure arose from pecuniary or political difficulties. At one time I know it was certainly the fashion to regard the *café* as a hot-bed of disaffection. The English *habitués* were prone to the opinion that every foreign gentleman in the place was strenuously opposed to existing institutions, cherished revolutionary ideas of a most sanguinary character, and was an exile from his native land solely by reason of the want of harmony between his own views and those of his government. But this could not always have been the case, as we all know. Men are fugitives from the country of their nativity for other than political reasons: or why are there so many English at Boulogne? I remember that I was myself much deceived in this way in regard to a frequenter of the *café*,

a small olive-coloured man with the largest moustache I ever saw—it was really a phenomenal moustache—and was quite as much entitled to a newspaper paragraph registering its proportions as any colossal gooseberry that ever was seen or even heard of; he rolled his fierce black eyes unceasingly, and in a manner terrible to behold; he smoked cigarettes for ever, to the great danger of his moustache, removing the paper tubes from his mouth now and then the more conveniently to grind his teeth or to spit upon the floor with the greater virulence, the while he amused himself with one of the simple pastimes dear to his nation and in vogue at the *café*. I remember that I attributed to this man ideas of a most objectionable character. It seemed to me that nothing could be more agreeable to him than a merciless *battue* of crowned heads, or to plant a ribbon-decked tree of liberty, watering it with aristocratic gore, the while was constructed a fraternal, revolutionary, terrorist government, each member of which (*sans culottes* of course) was bound to wear a blood-red bonnet of liberty and a tricoloured sash. I was deceived. For all the atrocity of his appearance, and the fury of his manners, the man was simply a respectable shop-

keeper in an adjoining street, and one of the most bland and obliging of bootmakers—wearing spectacles even in his shop and oftentimes nursing a baby!—I ever encountered. It is possible, therefore, that many other guests of the *café*, credited with revolutionary mania by casual English visitors, were, after all, not more harmful; for it seems to me the aspect of foreigners is often tried by a false test, and an erroneous judgment is so attained. A Briton with the appearance of my friend the bootmaker would have been without doubt a highly alarming personage; but the fact of the bootmaker being a Frenchman completely alters the case. Ferocity of aspect is a continental humour; and is yet perfectly innocuous. It doesn't really mean anything like what it looks to mean: quite as much as it is republican and revolutionary, it is indeed imperial. And we have all known for some time, that the Empire is—Peace.

Of our friends who were accustomed to assemble round the little marble tables of the *café* we have a few items of news to chronicle. Tom Norris has returned to his land of adoption—France—taking with him his old comrade Timson. They occasionally send over for exhibition in London important works, very much after the

manner of the late eminent French artist, St. Roche, the preceptor and idol of Mr. Norris. I regret that I am unable to record that these productions have met with very ready appreciation in this country—I mean, of course, appreciation in ready money—though they have been greatly admired by certain art-critics. Binns, the clerk in the Insurance Office, has married and taken up his residence at Islington. From the front windows of his house he commands views of the canal and the New River, and he is within easy hail of Sadler's Wells Theatre. It is whispered that his wife was the only person who could be found to hear to the end the story of his important adventure on Monte Rosa, and, as a consequence, she got her reward—in marriage. However, she has probably forbidden any repetition of the story now, for Binns has of late studiously avoided all reference to it. Mr. Gossett has passed all his examinations, and now appears before the world as a full-blown medical practitioner. He has lately undertaken the post of surgeon on board an emigrant ship bound for Vancouver's Island. It is possible that he may be afterwards spoken of in terms something similar to those contained in the evidence of the

witness in *Black-eyed Susan*, called to inform the court concerning the moral character of the prisoner, poor William: "Why, as to his medical qualifications, sir, as to his medical qualifications, why, he played the pianoforte like an angel!" But, for all that, I know that if circumstances ever call me to Vancouver's Island—and I fervently trust they never may—I should endeavour to secure a passage by the ship which carries Mr. Gossett as its surgeon. For I think an overdose of music would be preferable to one of medicine: while I should fancy that one of Mr. Gossett's incantation songs would be as efficacious as anything in driving away sea-sickness.

Mr. Lackington has quitted Omega Terrace, Camden Town, and secured Mr. Gossett's apartments in Coppice Row. I cannot say that he is much more industrious than of old, but as he is quite as happy, perhaps, it doesn't much matter. And hopes are entertained that he may ultimately catch from her example something of the perseverance and assiduity of widowed Mrs. Simmons, his landlady. She takes great interest in Jack, as the friend of her old and valued lodgers, Arnold Page and Phil Gossett: and it is possible that she may in time induce him to work a

little more regularly; indeed, it will now be really his own fault if he doesn't prosper, for people are beginning to inquire for his pictures, and he can sell much faster than he can produce. "Don't talk about not being in the mood, or waiting for inspiration," says Mrs. Simmons to her lodger; "set to and work, and it will all come right, mood and inspiration and all. Nicely I should be *goosed* if I were to wait at the wing of the Paroquet, and not go on till I felt inspired! And what would become then, do you think, of my poor dear Jemmy's blessed children? I go on, anyhow, and I soon warm with my part, and do all I know to bring down the applause, and I generally get it; I always do my best, and work hard, and the public know it, and like me for it. And I've had my salary raised of late, for they wanted to buy me off to the opposition theatre, the Vulture in Shoreditch, but I wouldn't go. I shall stick to the Paroquet as long as I can." (And indeed the actress is to be seen nightly on the boards of that establishment working very hard indeed.) "What would you like for dinner, Mr. Lackington, and do you want any of the children to sit to you?" The only change to be noted in the Coppice Row arrangements con-

sists in the relinquishment of the tobacco and snuff business. "I can't attend to that, sir; I haven't the heart, now my poor Jemmy's gone; and it would be such a dreadful thing to have the children going sneezing all about the place, or learning to smoke, or falling into any of the bad habits or goings on of their poor father. No, please goodness, we won't have that. The man that smokes, drinks—I never knew the rule to fail; and to think of that precious infant there, that sits smiling at me, and sucking his thumbs like a little king, as though he knew all I was talking about, bless him! to think of *his* ever taking to going over the way to that horrid Spotted Dog, as my poor Jemmy used to, and coming home in that dreadful state, and smelling that strong of spirits, that it filled the whole house; no, bless him, he'll never do it; he'll never break his poor mother's heart, will he? a darling. He's got quite his father's eyes: not what they were of late; but when he was steady at Bath, long ago now, the prettiest harlequin that ever was seen on the stage to my thinking, let who will say he wasn't!" Poor Mrs. Simmons!

Janet Gill's services, upon the urgent recommendation of Leo Carr, were secured by Lady

Lambeth. She was engaged to aid her ladyship in the bringing up and education of her young family, and entered at once upon the discharge of her duties. But she found that she was more particularly required to act as companion to her ladyship. Her position in the Lambeth household was a perfectly comfortable one, and the air of suffering which had at first distinguished her, gradually yielded to the kindly and sympathetic treatment she received. Her unremitting attention to the children during a period of sickness greatly endeared her to Lady Lambeth, who was profuse in acknowledging the merits of her friend. Upon the decease of Lord Lambeth, which happened recently, Janet withdrew with the young widow and her children to the family seat in the country. There are two subjects upon which Janet never speaks: one is in connection with the history of her father, and the other regards a certain letter she received from Arnold Page, and the reply she sent to it. As to this last, she has never ceased to congratulate herself, albeit it was not without deep pain she brought herself to reject the suit of a man, whom, she admitted to herself, she really loved.

Robin Hooper lives now almost altogether in the country, the solace of the declining years of his father and mother. He has seen Janet but seldom; perhaps assured of the utter hopelessness of his passion, he showed the wisest courage in avoiding its object as much as possible. But there have been compensating circumstances attending his suffering; not merely in the fact that his presence at the Wick Farm gives real pleasure to his parents, though the farmer still persists in considering his state as utterly hopeless, just as the farmer's wife continues to over-estimate his strength and sturdiness, and to disregard his deformity. It must be remembered that Robin is a poet, and a published collection of his songs has achieved for him no mean fame; the merits of his muse have received recognition from a large public. May not much of his success be attributed to the real feeling imported into his verses? Would there have been as much feeling if his love had triumphed in a common-place sort of way? Is it not almost desirable that poets should not be too happy, in order that they may learn in suffering what they teach in song? But doubtless time will bring to Robin alleviation of "the pangs of despised love"

—the love being, as he knew, without hope from the very first.

It is not possible to disguise the fact that the Marquis of Southernwood experienced a cruel disappointment when he found himself under the necessity of withdrawing his pretensions to the hand of Miss Carr. "It was an awful sell for Cupid," as the fellows of the Junior Adonis agreed in the smoking-room when the matter came before them for discussion; "they never saw any fellow so cut up—never. By George! an awful sell!" "Well, it was all that—I don't deny it," his lordship confessed to one or two intimates. He looked very rueful; the colour for once had gone from his cheeks; his eyes had lost a good deal of their wonted sparkle; and his hyacinthine locks were ill-arranged and out of curl. "But what was a fellow to do?" ("Baw!" from the person he addressed.) "You know, Chalker, old boy, you'd have done just the same." ("Aw!" from Chalker.) "The poor dear little thing, you know, I couldn't bear to see her crying, and miserable, and that. I ain't at all a fellow of that sort, you know: never could stand a woman crying—it always knocked me over. It wasn't flattering to a fellow's vanity, you know, to be told he wasn't

loved, or cared for, or that sort of thing. But, of course, she couldn't help that. I dare say she'd tried all she knew, poor thing, and when she found she couldn't manage it, why, of course, it was only right of her to tell me. And I won't have a word said against her by any man. She's a good, dear, little soul—and—and—by George! I'll never love another woman—I never will—and, in fact, I never can, not as I loved her. It was my own fault. I'd no right to cut in. I think I deserve all I got. I knew A. P. was in the case. I knew that she cared for him. I ought to have seen that I'd no chance coming after him. Only I loved that girl! 'pon my soul I did. I don't think I shall ever get over it. I don't think there's such another miserable beggar breathing as I am. Do I look bad, Chalker? But it don't seem to me that I care for anything now, or what I do, or what becomes of me. By Gad, you know a thing of this sort is enough to shut a fellow up for life, 'pon my soul it is! And she did look so devilish pretty when she was crying. I don't think I ever loved her so much as I did then—and the poor little thing wanted to go down on her knees to me; but of course I could not stand that—and then what a relief it was to her when I told her that it was all

right—that everything should be as she wished—that the affair should not go on—that sort of thing. I dare say you think me a d——d fool, Chalker, old boy, but I cried like a child. By Gad! I did. I couldn't help it. Well! what shall we do? Let's talk of something else. Let's do something, or go somewhere. I know I wish I could drive the whole thing out of my head, but I suppose I can't; only I'll never love another woman, I know that —never!"

His lordship retreated to Gashleigh Abbey to receive the condolements of his sister-in-law, the Marchioness, who was inclined to be exceedingly angry with Miss Carr for her cruel conduct. But his lordship would not listen to any charge being brought against Leo, stoutly maintaining that she was thoroughly justified in all she had done, and taking upon his own shoulders all the blame that could arise out of the matter. Indeed he was compelled to inform the Marchioness that he would at once quit the Abbey if another word were spoken to the detriment of Miss Carr; whereupon her ladyship was silent; and I think after a little time secretly applauded the chivalrous behaviour of his little lordship, and more recently forgave Leo for her share in his suffering.

It must be confessed that Lord Southernwood "went a little wild," as people say, about this time. He urged, in explanation, that he really hardly knew what he did. Certainly his proceedings were a little desperate. "I was out of my mind, you know—I do believe I was—just then, or I never should have been such a fool as to back Asparagus for the Cesarewitch; fancy putting an awful pot of money on such a brute as that! Of course I lost it. But I didn't care about that time what money I dropped." It was, perhaps, in compassion for his chapfallen state that a party of his friends projected a continental tour with a view of cheering him up. "It was pretty jolly," as he afterwards explained, "and we got on very well altogether: there was Flukemore, and Clipstone, Storkfort and Chalker, and we went I don't know where, and saw everything, and managed very well. We told off two fellows to fatigue duty—Flukemore and Chalker: the one had to get up *Murray*, to tell us where we were and what we were looking at; and we put the other on to *Bradshaw*, so that we might be all right as to trains and steamboats, and that. It was a very good plan, and saved us all trouble, and I think I've come back, on the whole, better than I went."

There is one subject upon which, if he would, Lord Southernwood could have given us, no doubt, very important imformation. I mean in regard to the history of Captain Gill, deceased. But he maintained considerable reserve. He could never be brought to say much more than this: "Well: yes, I knew him; but, for the sake of his daughter, it's perhaps as well to keep dark about him. He was a bad lot—I'll say that. He was our paymaster, and his accounts got into a frightful muddle; and some of the fellows suffered severely by him. But we agreed to hush it up. We none of us wanted the thing to get into the papers. There had been great irregularities. There was little doubt but that he'd committed felony, and might have been pulled up for it at any time. He was not a nice man, and he'd got mixed up with a strange set: a French money-lending Jew —something of that sort. And it was said that he suffered from a *coup de soleil*. But my own opinion was that it was all along of brandy; and he got worse and worse; and at last he bolted. And it was said that the Frenchman had got an extraordinary influence over him. But I never understood it thoroughly, and perhaps the less that's now said about it, why, the better for

all concerned; it's not a pleasant subject, and it's all done with now. Let's talk of something else."

The Times of no very recent date registered in its first column the demise of the Venerable Archdeacon of Binchester, better known to us as the Rev. Purton Wood, late rector of Oakmere. He was stated to have died "universally regretted." I fear that his estate was found by his administrator, his son, Hugh Wood, to be very considerably involved. But it was remarked that, after the decease of his parent, Mr. Wood seemed to be much less pressed for money than he had thitherto been.

And Mr. Lomax, and his wife?

Well, the secretary of the Wafer Stamp Office has never returned to England. He has been seen at various continental cities and watering-places; but I think he has been rather avoided by the English residents and visitors there. He has tried his two manners upon the foreigners with whom he has come in contact; but I don't know positively which he has found the more successful. He appears to have been in possession of ample means, and would probably have taken a respectable position in society, but that

every now and then unpleasant rumours concerning him travelled about. He has pretended to represent, in some vague way, the Government of which he was formerly the servant. But it was noticed that the British consulate establishments, at whatever place he appeared, afforded him no sort of countenance. He was joined at last by his wife, who had been advised to travel, as a means of counteracting the headaches to which she had become more than ever subject The children are now permanently in charge of their relatives, uncle Arnold and his wife, the present occupants of Oakmere Court. I believe Edith and Rosy are very happy where they are, and becoming rapidly accustomed and resigned to the prolonged absence of their parents. We are not much in the way of hearing particular news of Mr. and Mrs. Lomax; but a short time ago there was current in club smoking-rooms a story to which all friends of the family are requested to give the most positive contradiction. It was something to the effect that an Englishman very like Mr. Lomax in person had been publicly horsewhipped for cheating, or trying to cheat, at cards. In fact, there existed various stories, all having for their chief point a charge against Mr. Lomax, seriously affecting

his integrity. Was it in confirmation or in explanation of these sinister reports that a statement followed, to the effect that it had been found necessary to place him under personal restraint, that various recent proceedings of his had been marked by a really alarming eccentricity, and that it was feared that symptoms of a decided softening of the brain had manifested themselves? Certain of the faculty were at no loss to discover an explanation of this disorder, which they unhesitatingly attributed to the frequent railway journeys undertaken by the patient to and from Whitehall at the time when he was resident at Oakmere Court, the house of his brother-in-law. It is added that no hopes are entertained of his recovery, and that the general state of his health does not promise for him a very protracted period of suffering. Whatever his condition, however, Mrs. Lomax continues with her husband.

Oakmere Court has regained its old comfortable aspect under the auspices of its present tenants. Many of our friends assemble there at Christmas time, and on other holiday occasions. Mr. Gossett has sung his best songs in the drawing-room of the Court. Mr. Robin Hooper has recited his verses, while Hugh Wood has ap-

plauded: and Mr. Lackington has been seen sketching in the pleasant avenues of the park. The mistress of the Court is pleased to welcome heartily all these to her halls. More pleased still was she when Janet Gill plucked up heart enough to spend her holidays with her old friends. What long conversations the ladies enjoyed together! especially one day when they drove over to Croxall to visit the room in which had died a poor little school-girl very dear to both of them, and afterwards journeyed to Oakmere churchyard to view once more the grave of poor little Baby Gill.

Concerning Miss Bigg and her companion, Booth, the Gesler and Sarnem of Chapone House, Kew Green, I have nothing further to communicate. It is conjectured that they are still engaged in promoting the sale of the poet Bigg's soul poem, *The Course of Life*, in twenty cantos. Dr. Hawkshaw, indefatigable as ever, states that he has taken effective means to prevent his name being placed in the list of subscribers to the work, while he has a private conviction that the ex-schoolmistress will be found to figure some day in the police reports as a begging-letter impostor, when he hopes the magistrate will not be in a lenient mood.

Old Mr. Carr is hearty and happy, well satisfied with the son-in-law who has toiled so earnestly for the iron-founders as now to take his place in the list of partners; who has worked hard to deserve all the good things fortune has showered upon him. And especially pleased is the old gentleman with his grandchildren, now very clamorous in the nursery. "If only my poor wife had lived to see our darling's babies! How happy it would have made her! Well, well. It little matters how soon I am taken away to join her. My child is very very happy with her husband and her children. Thank Heaven!"

"Amen!" said some one, reverently, at his side; and he found his hand pressed tenderly by his son-in-law.

"What have I ever done to deserve all this happiness?" Arnold would sometimes ask himself. It must have been, as people had said of him from the first, he was a very lucky dog! He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth!

And yet something must be due to the great good there is in the fellow! Hear how his father-in-law sings his praises, and consider how devoted are his friends to him; how attached his tenants; how his children cling to him; above all, how his

wife loves him. Surely, he could not win all these and keep them, without some merit of his own?

He is not often in London now. His time is divided between his estate at Oakmere and his business at the iron-foundry; and I think I may say for certain now, that he has abandoned all notion of representing Woodlandshire in Parliament; he declares openly his unfitness for public life, though the chances in favour of his election, if he would only present himself as a candidate, are now better than ever. Even more persistent is he in his determination that he will never again, under any circumstances, accept a seat at the board of direction of any public company whatever.

And Leo? Be sure that she is happy if her husband is; happy with all that supreme happiness of a woman who is loved as fondly as she loves.

I close these records with a publication of two rumours that have just reached me, they refer to two marriages as likely to be solemnized now very shortly.

I give the reports precisely as I have heard them. I have no time to enter into any discussion as to their probable truth.

One is to the effect that the Marquis of Southernwood is about to be united to the widowed Lady Lambeth (formerly the Honourable Miss Pincott).

The other points to a union between Hugh Wood and Janet Gill. It is certain that these two were seen to be a good deal together during their recent visit to Oakmere, when the Christmas holidays were kept in a highly festive way.

I will simply add a hope that both rumours may prove to be true.

THE END.

London: Printed by SMITH, ELDER and Co., 15½, Old Bailey, E.C.

SMITH, ELDER & CO.'S
NEW PUBLICATIONS.

ICELAND: Its Scenes and its Sagas. By Sabine Baring Gould, M.A. With numerous Illustrations, and a Map. Royal 8vo.

QUEENS OF SONG: Being Memoirs of the most Famous Female Vocalists, from the Earliest Days of the Opera to the Present Time. With Six Portraits, engraved on Steel. Two Vols. 8vo.

THE NEW FOREST: Its History and Scenery. By John R. Wise. With Sixty-Two Views, and other Illustrations, by Walter Crane. Engraved by W. J. Linton. A new Map of the Forest, and Geological Sections. Small 4to. Printed on Toned Paper, and superbly bound. Price One Guinea.

WATERLOO: The Downfall of the First Napoleon. A History of the Campaign of 1815. By George Hooper, Author of "The Italian Campaigns of General Bonaparte." With Maps and Plans. Demy 8vo. 15*s.* cloth.

SHAKESPEARE COMMENTARIES. By Dr. G. G. Gervinus, Professor at Heidelberg. Translated under the Author's superintendence, by F. E. Bunnett. Two Vols. Demy 8vo. 24*s.* cloth.

TEN YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES: Being an Englishman's Views of Men and Things in the North and South. By D. W. Mitchell. Post 8vo. 9*s.* cloth.

LIFE IN NATURE. By James Hinton, Author of "Man and His Dwelling Place." Crown 8vo. 6*s.* cloth.

ENGLAND UNDER GOD By the Ven. Archdeacon Evans, Author of "The Rectory of Valehead," &c. Crown 8vo. 7*s.* 6*d.* cloth.

SISTERHOODS IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND. With Notices of some Charitable Sisterhoods in the Romish Church. By Margaret Goodman, Author of "Experiences of an English Sister of Mercy." Second Edition. Crown 8vo. 6*s.* cloth.

JOURNAL OF A POLITICAL MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN IN 1857. With an Account of the Country and People. By H. W. Bellew, Medical Officer to the Mission. With Eight Plates. 8vo. 16*s.* cloth.

ROUNDABOUT PAPERS. (Reprinted from the *Cornhill Magazine.*) By W. M. Thackeray. With Illustrations. Cr. 8vo. 7*s.* 6*d.* cloth.

LOST AMONG THE AFFGHANS: Adventures of John Campbell (otherwise Feringhee Bacha) amongst the Wild Tribes of Central Asia. Related by Himself to Hubert Oswald Fry. With Portrait. Post 8vo. 7*s.* 6*d.* cloth.

AFTER DARK. By Wilkie Collins, Author of "The Woman in White," &c. With Five Illustrations. Crown 8vo. 5*s.* cloth.

LONDON: SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

NEW NOVELS.

I.

A DARK NIGHT'S WORK. By Mrs. GASKELL, Author of "Sylvia's Lovers," &c. (Reprinted from *All the Year Round.*) One Vol. Post 8vo.

II.

THE STORY OF ELIZABETH. (Reprinted from the *Cornhill Magazine.*) With Two Illustrations. One Vol. Post 8vo.

III.

SYLVIA'S LOVERS. By Mrs. GASKELL, Author of "Mary Barton," "North and South," "Life of Charlotte Brontë," &c. Second Edition. Three Vols. Post 8vo.

IV.

SKIRMISHING. By the Author of "Who Breaks — Pays," "Cousin Stella," &c. One Vol. Post 8vo.

V.

A SIMPLE WOMAN. By the Author of "Nut-Brown Maids," &c. One Vol. Post 8vo.

VI.

ANNIE WARLEIGH'S FORTUNES. By HOLME LEE, Author of "Against Wind and Tide," "Kathie Brande," &c. Three Vols. Post 8vo.

VII.

CHESTERFORD. By the Author of "A Bad Beginning." Three Vols. Post 8vo.

VIII.

LEO. By DUTTON COOK, Author of "Paul Foster's Daughter." Three Vols. Post 8vo.

IX.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT. Two Vols. Post 8vo.

X.

ARROWS IN THE DARK. By the Author of "Said and Done." One Vol. Post 8vo.

XI.

ADRIAN L'ESTRANGE. One Vol. Post 8vo.

XII.

ENTANGLEMENTS. By the Author of "Mr. Arle," "Caste," "Bond and Free," &c. Two Vols. Post 8vo.

XIII.

WINIFRED'S WOOING. By GEORGIANA M. CRAIK, Author of "Lost and Won," "Riverston," &c. One Vol. Post 8vo.

XIV.

NORMANTON. By A. J. BARROWCLIFFE, Author of "Amberhill," "Trust for Trust," &c. One Vol. Post 8vo.

LONDON: SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

75

